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*Short Biographies—No. 9*

**T. E. LAWRENCE**





# T. E. LAWRENCE

BY

CHARLES EDMONDS

*Author of 'A Subaltern's War'*

'of all the accomplishments necessary for the  
Commander of an army, Courage is the first,  
without which I make no account of the others;  
the second is Genius, which must be strong  
and fertile in expedients; the third is Health.'

MARSHAL SAXE

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## PREFACE

IT might be thought that there is no more to be said about a man whose autobiography has been hailed as a masterpiece, and who has been the subject of two biographies and a whole saga of legend, before his death at the age of forty-six. The *Seven Pillars* is a great book, but it is not history; it will rank in the literature of the world with Augustine's and with Rousseau's *Confessions*, rather than with Caesar's *Commentaries* or Wellington's *Despatches*. On Lawrence's own story are based the admirable books by Liddell Hart and Robert Graves, each written under the influence of Lawrence's magnetic friendship. Future students of his career will always be dependent on the conversations and correspondence with Lawrence reported by these authors, but Mr Graves, perhaps, shares too many of Lawrence's prejudices to write dispassionately, and Captain Liddell Hart writes principally as a military theorist. Further, each of these writers was hampered by the difficulty of writing about a man whose future might prove as remarkable as his past; that restriction, unhappily, is removed.

## PREFACE

I presume to no esoteric knowledge, and have no secrets to reveal. Many years must elapse before the whole story of Lawrence's life is made public; but it is possible now to estimate the sum of his achievements in the Middle East, and the reputation he earned among his contemporaries. What I have found less easy is to reduce to terms of simple rationality a character infinitely subtle and sensitive.

Among many benefits I owe to Mr Peter Davis, I acknowledge here the opportunity of writing this book, and much assistance in the collection of material. For advice and help I am also obliged to Mr Terence Bird, Major A. H. Carrington, the Headmaster of the City of Oxford School, Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, Mr Archibald Lyall, Mr Edward Marsh, Mr Bruce Rogers, Sir John Shuckburgh, Sir J. C. Squire, Professor H. W. V. Temperley, and to one other, without whose encouragement the book would neither have been begun nor completed.

But they are not to be held responsible for any opinion I have advanced.

C.E.

*October 1935*

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## THOMAS EDWARD LAWRENCE

Aug. 15th, 1888.	Born at Tremadoc, North Wales.
Sept. 1896-July, 1907.	At the City of Oxford High School.
Oct. 1907-June, 1910.	Meyricke Exhibitioner, Jesus College, Oxford.
1909.	First visit to Syria.
1910-1914.	Research Student, Magdalen College, Oxford.
Mar. 1911-1914.	Digging at Carchemish or travelling in the East.
Winter, 1913-1914.	Assisted in the Archaeological Survey of Sinai.
Summer, 1914.	At Oxford.
Oct. 23rd, 1914.	Gazetted Second Lieutenant. At the War Office.
Dec. 1914-Jan. 1917.	Intelligence Department, Egyptian Expeditionary Force.
Jan. 1917-Oct. 1918.	Liaison officer with Emir Feisal.
Jan.-Apr. 1919.	Attached to the Foreign Office delegation at Versailles.
July, 1919.	Demobilized.
Summer, 1919.	On Emir Feisal's Staff at Paris.
Nov. 1919.	Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.
Feb. 1921-July, 1922.	Political Adviser to Middle Eastern Department, Colonial Office.
Aug. 1922.	Enlisted in R.A.F. as J. H. Ross, discharged February, 1923.
Mar. 1923.	Enlisted in Tank Corps as T. E. Shaw.
Aug. 1925.	Re-admitted to the R.A.F.
Dec. 1926-Feb. 1929.	Stationed in India.
1926.	Publication of <i>Seven Pillars</i> ('subscribers' edition').
Feb. 26th, 1935.	Discharged from R.A.F. on completion of service.
May 19th, 1935.	Died.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EDUCATION OF AN ADVENTURER

MANY adventurers from the western nations have penetrated into lands neglected and almost forgotten during the centuries of Turkish misrule; but it can hardly be by a series of coincidences that there has been among them a succession—a dynasty, one might almost say—of notable Englishmen and Englishwomen, who have turned towards the Arabian Desert with a sort of lover's passion; who have found a second home in Arabia, of all countries the furthest removed from England in respect of soil and scenery and climate; who have willingly shared the harsh life of the Bedouin, and envied their freedom from the ties of government and property and station. Perhaps the fatalist element in English Puritanism, combined with the lawless individualism of the strongest English characters, finds something akin to itself in the Bedouin Arab, at once a passionate Moslem, and a passionate egoist. This English yearning towards a way of life, the opposite of soft English comfort, is reflected in the literature of travel,



rich in books about the Desert. 'Every young Englishman', wrote Lawrence, 'has the roots of eccentricity in him', and the plant flourishes in Desert soil.

Just a hundred years ago, the arrogant Kinglake, most insular of travellers, full of contempt for Levantine foreigners, too snobbish to exchange a greeting with a brother-Englishman met by chance in Sinai, too proud to take precautions against the plague, paid his free tribute to the charm, the misery and the terror of the Desert, in a book which has stirred many an English lad to try its power. Weirdest of his encounters was that with Pitt's half-crazy niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, living like a sheikh in a ruined convent on the Lebanon, and waging private war with her neighbours, a portent even among the company of English who have given themselves to the East. A traveller of wider range and less insular prejudice than Kinglake was Sir Richard Burton, who went to Mecca in disguise. A hero to many, he was no hero to T. E. Lawrence, who despised his boastfulness and his affected style of writing. A better man was Charles Doughty, who roamed Arabia for two years as an undisguised Christian, and wrote the book from which Lawrence got his first impressions of the Desert and its inhabitants. Doughty had 'a very un-

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comfortable opinion ' of travellers who visited the Holy Places of Islam, disguised as Moslems. He thought it beneath the dignity of a man, and much beneath the honour of a Christian, to stoop to the level of those who believe in an irrational universe, even for the sake of adding to the stock of geographical knowledge.

Doughty's passion for uncompromising truthfulness showed itself in his thirst for discovery, in his abundant and yet laborious style of writing, and in the simplicity of his life, both at home and in Arabia. In wild countries a doctor is always welcomed, and it was as Khalil, the Nazarene physician, that he set out from Damascus in 1875 to wander on foot and alone through the North-western districts of Arabia. Nine years after his return, the two large volumes of *Arabia Deserta* were published. Doughty thought of his book as an epic in prose form, the record of a spiritual experience rather than a mere traveller's tale; and so it was received by the best judges; but the book has been more praised than read. Among hostile critics was Sir Richard Burton, who showed some irritation at Doughty's contempt for the Moslem religion, and some jealousy that Doughty had outdone his feats. It irked him to read of the indignities that Doughty had undergone at the hands of Turkish officials and

Bedouin chiefs. More sympathetic readers, such as Dr Hogarth, his friend and Lawrence's, took a different view of the humble, candid traveller who went about doing good, who was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Lawrence wrote of *Arabia Deserta* that it was 'a book not like other books but something particular, a bible of its kind'.

Unfortunately there were few such sympathetic readers. Not only was it a large expensive book, which remained out of print when the first edition had been sold, but it made very difficult reading. History and topography, manners and customs, linguistic observations, geological, biological details, are packed together in formidable sequence. All the treasures of Arabia are heaped up before the reader, and specified in terms from the author's equally rich vocabulary. Frequent oriental names and phrases are dovetailed into English sentences which are themselves such as no one but Doughty would have constructed. The mass, the complexity, the intensity of the book are all too much for any but a determined student, yet in *Arabia Deserta* may be found the clue to Lawrence's career and character.

Yet Englishmen of quite another stamp were also Lawrence's forerunners. Gordon had much

in common with him, not only his uncanny power over men, and his furious energy, but his horror of English society, his dislike of women's company, his streak of asceticism. These qualities, too, were not lacking in Kitchener when, as a young man, he spent years among the Bedouin, first mapping Western Palestine, and then in the Secret Service in Egypt, two first steps strangely similar to Lawrence's. An even closer parallel may be seen between the careers of Lawrence and Edward Palmer, who was killed in the Egyptian war of 1882. Palmer was a Cambridge lad, largely self-educated, and was admitted somewhat irregularly to the University, because of his extraordinary proficiency at oriental dialects. He had a taste for low life, went with the gypsies, and was one of the discoverers of the very ancient thieves'-cant, called *Shelta*. Because he knew every sort of Levantine dialect, he was persuaded to go on a surveying expedition to Sinai, although he was Professor of Arabic at Cambridge. Later, when Arabi Pasha's rebellion broke out, this middle-aged don rode alone across the desert from Gaza to Suez, persuading the tribes, by personal influence and the promise of subsidies, not to rise in rebellion. At his request they guarded the Suez Canal when they had been expected to destroy it. But on a

second expedition Palmer was murdered and robbed of the gold he carried with him.

These tales of Eastern travel and adventure were first read by T. E. Lawrence as a boy, at a time when Abdul Hamid still reigned at Constantinople, when Kitchener had just avenged the death of Gordon. He read prodigiously, lying on a rug in a hut which he had built behind an Oxford villa; and fell into daydreams about the Arabs and the Desert. It was a plain duty to oppose the ancient and corrupt empire which lay heavily upon so many nations. Once, when Haroun-al-Raschid ruled at Baghdad, the Arabs had been free and great. Why, since the Turks seemed incapable of reforming themselves, should not an Englishman do for them what Byron had done for Greece? Why should he not learn to know the East as Doughty knew it, and control the Bedouin as Palmer controlled them, and yet be as politic as Kitchener? But these were no more than the daydreams of a child, whose real destiny seemed to lie in the quiet world of scholarship.

He was born at Tremadoc on August 15th, 1888, the third of a family of five sons, and was brought up in Oxford, where education came cheap; for his father, Thomas Lawrence, an

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Anglo-Irish protestant squire, had no more than £300 a year. Young 'Ned' Lawrence, as he was then called, went to the City of Oxford High School, but picked up most of his early education, as a child does in a large family, from his elder brothers. Like other studious but adventurous children, he found formal lessons 'an irrelevant and time-wasting nuisance' which interfered with his own reading. He browsed through armfuls of books from the Union Library far into the night, until he went to sleep where he lay. Formal games like formal lessons he thought a bore, preferring to spend his spare time roaming the country on a bicycle in search of antiquities. When still a schoolboy he visited almost every twelfth-century castle in England and France, and while sleeping out in the Rhone delta, at sixteen years old caught malaria, the first of many bouts to which in later life he paid little attention. He was very strong and hardy, having trained himself at that early age to go without food for long periods; and even as a boy he had acquired the nocturnal habits that always surprised his friends. Though no footballer or cricketer, he was fond of rough-and-tumble games, could protect himself from aggression, and did so in schoolboy fights. Among the legends that have grown up about him is his

tiny stature, but he was not ridiculously small. His growth was arrested at five feet five inches after he broke his leg while wrestling with a friend. The short, sturdy, golden-haired boy, with a long head, heavy jaw, and bright blue eyes, who went up to the University in 1907, was already an adventurer.

He was given a scholarship in History at Jesus College, where a preference is allowed to candidates born in Wales. Lucky it was for Lawrence that he was not obliged to comply with the routine and adhere strictly to the curriculum of a modern university. At Oxford, allowances were made for this odd undergraduate whose plan of studying modern history was to read all night whatever took his fancy—no text-books, but primary authorities and any contemporary works that threw a sidelight on his subject. He rarely attended lectures. With the ordinary social life of an undergraduate he had few points of contact; he had friends but not acquaintances. One fellow-student wrote that he was already a Stoic 'holding aloof from men' to avoid the possibility of disillusion. When he revealed his powers in conversation or in a rare speech at a College Society his hearers were spell-bound. He was a solitary, but never a prig. The forbidden sport of roof-climbing by night attracted one who had

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scaled the turrets of so many ruinous castles. The future guerrilla leader distinguished himself in leading assaults on a neighbour's room, armed with a soda-water siphon and protected by crawling on all fours beneath an inverted bath. The future pioneer explored the subterranean tunnels of the Trill Mill Stream which flows beneath the 'little dark shop' in Saint Aldate's (where the fancy of Lewis Carroll once pictured an old sheep knitting), and returned to lead an expedition in canoes down the dark channels.

Lawrence's chief interest at this time was in military history, which provided him with a 'Special Subject' for his University examinations and with a whole succession of hobbies, none of them without usefulness to him afterwards in Arabia. He read French chronicles of the Crusades, and passed from them to treatises on early medieval warfare in Latin and Byzantine Greek. Next came the campaigns of the great captains of antiquity and of modern times, studied from written records, and on the ground. He corrected the accepted topography of Cromwell's siege of Oxford and marched to the Danube in the track of Marlborough. It was a bookish unpractical interest, arising out of the study of Napoleon's career, that led him to investigate the theory of war, and to store in his



retentive memory some comparisons between the lessons Napoleon had learnt from his masters, and the lessons Napoleon's successors learnt from him. In the eighteenth-century wars, soldiers had been far too valuable to be treated as 'cannon-fodder', but had been highly trained professionals used with great economy to achieve clearly defined objectives. Napoleon himself had been bred in the old military school, and had been a profound student of the campaigns of the previous age; especially of Marshal Saxe who beat the British at Fontenoy, and published *Reveries upon the Art of War*. So cool-headed and thrifty of life were the old generals that Napoleon found it hard to persuade them to risk a pitched battle at all. But the Wars arising from the French Revolution were fought in quite a different way. Young Bonaparte, who had learned his trade by manœuvring small mobile bodies of professionals, became an Emperor leading a nation in arms, a vast mob of half-trained enthusiasts, eager to shed their blood for an ideal France. The massed attacks and ruthless carnage of Napoleon's later campaigns led to a new theory of war which Clausewitz imposed on the military schools of the nineteenth century. The aim of a general was now to concentrate the maximum of force against the enemy's main

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army, and to crush it in battle. By this method the Prussians defeated France in 1870; by this method the French planned to get their revenge. A certain Colonel Foch at the *École de Guerre* was the modern exponent of the theory. In his lectures he taught that the Offensive Spirit was a soldier's first duty, and that every campaign should resolve into a battle *à outrance*. Young Lawrence respected the intellect of Clausewitz, but thought Foch something of a charlatan.

All this was a mere student's hobby, a side-issue for a solitary inconspicuous undergraduate, and one among several side-issues. He had come under the notice of Dr D. G. Hogarth, the keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, by offering to rearrange a neglected collection of medieval pottery, a task which he performed as skilfully and unobtrusively as any of the more responsible duties of his later life. Lawrence was methodical; he performed mechanical tasks always in an original way, and with calculated economy of effort. A job involving routine and, at the same time, skilled knowledge suited him very well, so that, if there had been no war, he might have lived and died the Curator of a Museum.

During his last long vacation Lawrence went to study the Crusaders' Castles in Syria. He had learned some conversational Arabic from a

Syrian clergyman in Oxford, and, on the advice of Doughty, to whom he had shyly written, he decided to travel alone and on foot, ignoring the objections of Hogarth. He set out with a pistol, and an open letter of introduction from Lord Curzon, the Chancellor of Oxford, to make his first acquaintance with the district through which Allenby's cavalry were to ride. During the next five years he wandered through every part of Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Sinai, and Egypt, living as one of the people, not as a European tourist. He learned to be conversant with all the dialects of spoken Arabic (though not to be a scholar in classical Arabic), with the confused politics of the disintegrating Turkish Empire, with the topography of the Arab world. Though he never used a disguise or affected to be a Mohammedan, he found it convenient to wear an Arab headcloth, for comfort and because the natives were strangely suspicious of a European hat or helmet.

On his first trip in the summer of 1909, his twenty-first year, Lawrence photographed fifty Crusaders' Castles, and began to be interested in the remains of the Hittite civilisation of which little was known. In some remote spot near the Euphrates, a tribesman dogged him all day, assaulted him, and tried to steal his watch. He

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would have been murdered had not a shepherd accidentally appeared and frightened away the robber. Lawrence walked with a headache to the nearest town and led back a body of police who arrested their man. 'I was after my Hittite seals,' said Lawrence, 'not the watch.' He returned to Oxford and submitted to the examiners a thesis on Medieval Castles, for which he was awarded a degree with first-class honours in Modern History. The argument of his thesis, which has never been published, is that, contrary to the accepted belief, the castles built in the Levant during the Crusades are based upon those built in Europe: the Crusaders did not learn their art of military architecture in the East, but introduced it there.

In 1910, Hogarth persuaded Magdalen College to give Lawrence a travelling scholarship for four years, which enabled him to join the expedition then excavating the ruins of the Hittite city, Carchemish. Much legend has grown up about Lawrence's adventures during these four years, when he was acquiring his unusual knowledge of the Middle East. It was the custom of the excavators to work in the spring and autumn, returning to England between 'campaigns', but Lawrence, who had only a hundred pounds a year, preferred to stay at Carchemish, or to

wander off on some lowly expedition in native dress. He wrote to Doughty asking for advice about living with a gypsy tribe, and was, for once, a little taken aback when told that they lived on raw flesh. Doughty commissioned him to enquire after some old friends, warned him against fanatics in Jedda, and recommended omelettes made from ostrich eggs. When next in England, Lawrence, in a diffident boyish letter, wrote asking whether he might visit Doughty, 'having been much scorned by an Arab near Lake Huleh, for not knowing you'. Hogarth added a recommendation that Lawrence was 'a boy of extraordinary aptitude both for archaeology and a wandering life among Arabs'. Two years later Lawrence was writing to Doughty of his old friend's son, Hajji Mohammed of Damascus, who had relations in Basra and in Cairo, and 'almost a monopoly of forwarding Europeans in Arabia'. Lawrence's associates were not always so respectable: on one occasion he worked as a dock labourer at Port Said; on another he was imprisoned as a deserter from the Turkish Army, but escaped by bribing the guard.

At Carchemish, his activities were noted by several persons whose record is worth reading. He was working chiefly with a contemporary,

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C. L. Woolley (now Sir Leonard Woolley), who has described Lawrence's extraordinary control over the Arab labourers, contrasting it with the continual bickering between the German engineers and their men in a neighbouring railway construction camp. Lawrence, not much more than an undergraduate, and looking younger than his age, was not above playing practical jokes on his German neighbours. Even at this time there were rumours of his political activities, which he fostered by dragging drain pipes to the top of his spoil-bank, leaving the credulous Germans to suppose that they were guns mounted to command the Baghdad railway. There was often friction between the two camps, naturally enough, when the engineers' work demanded the demolition of some mound which might be of interest to the archaeologists. On one such mound a faithful Arab sat with a gun threatening to shoot any German who set foot on it. A fight was only prevented by Lawrence, who appeared on the scene with a Turkish official, whom he had enlisted in his cause by telegraphing to the Government at Constantinople. Relations grew worse when a house-servant of the English party was flogged by a German. English, and Arabs, and Germans were alike astonished at the sterner side which the quiet, boyish archaeologist re-

vealed. He browbeat the German into making a public apology before the other servants. The engineers had good cause to patch up the quarrel when their Kurdish labourers mutinied. Lawrence and Woolley arrived to find the Germans shooting wildly from the windows at a mob of armed men who were besieging their house. They intervened in a hail of bullets and after some hours brought the combatants to terms.

These feats would not have been remembered if Lawrence's later career had not given them significance. Visitors to Carchemish noticed rather that this capable scholar, in shorts and a khaki shirt and a Jesus College blazer, looked so absurdly young. When not working, he practised shooting with a pistol, bathed in the Euphrates, or went boating in a crazy craft with a little outboard engine. All his behaviour, too, was whimsical: he humoured the Arabs, outwitted Turkish officials, conducted his feud with the engineers, always by unexpected methods, closing every incident with a joke. Apart from his archaeological work, which was always praised, he was not always taken seriously at first sight. He went down to look at an excavation which Flinders Petrie was making in Egypt and was quite misunderstood. 'Young man,' said the old antiquary, not, it seems, much familiar with young

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men's habit's, 'we don't play cricket here.' The khaki shorts had put quite the wrong idea into his head.

A traveller, then less eminent, met Lawrence in 1913 at Carchemish. This was Hubert Young (now Sir Hubert Young), a lively subaltern, who wanted to make his way back to India by crossing the Syrian desert. The two young Englishmen, with their common passion for exploring the Arab world, struck up an acquaintance which was to be renewed at each of the crises in Lawrence's life. Young was delighted with Lawrence, especially when he obliged a Turkish gendarme to arrest a poacher for dynamiting fish; Lawrence was equally pleased with Young: he knew some Greek even though he was a soldier. It was their fate to be associated in the same undertaking, which they regarded from opposed points of view. Their methods and their work were as different as their natures, but they paid generous tributes to one another's work and in the end they agreed upon a solution of the problem. Young had the training of a soldier and the temperament of a commander; he liked to work methodically, and to advance by reconnoitred stages; he had little liking for improvised plans, and none for rash and careless and unpunctual people; he could get things



done, if they were done decently and in order; he could lead men if they understood the meaning of free discipline. It is typical that when Lawrence was tramping Syria in native dress, Young preferred to proclaim himself a Briton. You could go anywhere in the Turkish Dominions, he was told, 'with a solar topee and a Union Jack', and he found it true. Not at all unaware of the ludicrous side of the undertaking, he rafted down the Tigris beneath the flag of his country, boldly and safely stopping to buy milk for his coffee from Kurdish brigands who fired on all other travellers.

Late in 1913 Lawrence and Woolley were asked to join Colonel Newcombe in surveying the Sinai Peninsula for the Palestine Exploration Society. Forty years earlier, the Society had employed Kitchener, then a young subaltern, to make a survey of the Holy Land. He was now, as British Consul-General, the real ruler of Egypt, and no man understood better what was likely to happen in Turkey when the expected war should break out in Europe.

The Sinai Archaeological Survey, then, was undertaken with intentions that were partly political; to provide maps for the defence of the Suez Canal. When the British advanced from Egypt into Palestine they moved across the area

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mapped by Lawrence into the area mapped by Kitchener himself. Lawrence was chiefly responsible for describing the district about the head of the Gulf of Akaba, as far inland as the rock-hewn ruins of Petra, and the Wadi Musa, which, three years later, was to be the front line of the Arab armies. In the spring he was back at Carchemish with Woolley, working at their report, which they completed in England during the summer.

The month of August, 1914, gave a new importance to the Sinai survey. Newcombe was called away to France, leaving the two young archaeologists to finish the book (*The Wilderness of Zin*, by C. L. Woolley and T. E. Lawrence), which they dedicated to him. It is said that Kitchener persuaded Lawrence not to enlist till the work was done. In September, Hogarth recommended him as assistant to Colonel Hedley in the Geographical Section of the General Staff at the War Office, where he was employed making maps of Flanders and of Sinai. A few weeks later, Hogarth asked Hedley for news of Lawrence. 'He's running my whole department for me', said Hedley.

## CHAPTER II

### TURKS AND ARABS

THE old Sultan Abdul Hamid, as Caliph of Islam, had built a narrow gauge railway from Aleppo to Medina, partly to assist pilgrims on their way to Mecca, partly to ensure the policing of the unruly Arabs. His policy was to maintain the supremacy of the Moslems; after his fall Turkish imperialism took a new colour under the Young Turks, who cared as little for the Holy Province of Arabia as for Christian Armenia.

Enver, the new ruler of Turkey, was 'pan-Turanian', and dreamed of uniting the Turks of Anatolia, a stupid sturdy breed of peasant-soldiers, with the related peoples who lived under Russian or Persian rule in the highlands about the Caspian Sea. The Old Turks had been friendly to England, the other great Moslem power; Enver's Young Turks were more concerned with hostility to Russia, Turkey's neighbour in the Caucasus; and hostility to Russia meant alliance with Germany, to which end he called in German experts, a step which was of the greatest importance, because of the German

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plan to control the Middle East by means of a railway from Berlin to Baghdad. While German officers struggled heroically with the ignorance and stubborn prejudice of the Turkish generals, German engineers pushed on with the railway through the Taurus mountains and across the Euphrates, in sight of the mound of Carchemish, where T. E. Lawrence delved among Hittite ruins.

Before the outbreak of the Great War Arab secret societies were planning to rise in revolt; nor was this unknown to Kitchener. In February 1914, the Emir Abdulla (now Ruler of Trans-Jordania) had told him in Cairo that his father, Sherif Hussein of Mecca, was planning to make himself ruler of all the Arabs. Six months later, when Kitchener became Secretary for War, it was his first endeavour to prevent a breach with Turkey, until Enver threw in his lot with Germany. War with Turkey was formally declared on November 5th, 1914, and on the 11th the Sultan of Turkey (for Enver still allowed the existence of a puppet-monarch) proclaimed a *Jehad*, a Holy War to be waged by all Moslems against his enemies. Negotiations with the Arab plotters could then go forward, but must be conducted with the greatest discretion for the sake of the Indian Moslems, who might not approve of

English interference in the government of Mecca. All depended on Hussein, who had been exchanging cautious messages with Kitchener. He declined to proclaim a Holy War at Mecca but wisely refrained from a premature revolt against Turkey.

The first step taken by England was to declare Egypt a Protectorate, thus severing its nominal connection with Turkey. Kitchener brought troops from India for the defence of the Suez Canal, and concentrated in Egypt Australians, New Zealanders, and English Territorials, who were to complete their training in the healthy Egyptian winter. For the first three years of the war the garrison of Egypt was the strategic reserve of the Empire. Its intelligence service was organised by Colonel Clayton with the help of a brilliant team sent out from England in December—Newcombe, Woolley, Lawrence, Aubrey Herbert, and George Lloyd (now Lord Lloyd), among them. This was the nucleus of the Arab Bureau, which later controlled the policy of Britain throughout the Middle East. One of their set, Sir Mark Sykes, became adviser to the Cabinet; another, Miss Gertrude Bell, whose knowledge of the Arab world rivalled Lawrence's, advised the Political officers in Mesopotamia; Lawrence was the expert on Arab affairs in Syria.

## TURKS AND ARABS

The natural reticence of Intelligence Departments and Lawrence's own secretiveness make his life in 1915 and 1916 difficult to reconstruct. Cairo and Alexandria, cities always notorious for their vicious, cosmopolitan underworld, provided plenty of material for a Secret Service Agent. His principal task in Colonel Clayton's office was to discover and report on the dispositions of the Turkish Army, from information got by spies. To Cairo there came the agents of Greek politicians negotiating, or affecting to negotiate, for Venizelos; revolutionary Greeks from Smyrna; Armenian refugees from Cilicia; Syrians, Mesopotamians, and plotters from the Arabian desert. The threads of half-a-dozen intrigues against the Turks, and as many against the British, met and crossed somewhere in Egypt; and were unravelled in the office where the little archaeologist worked. About the Turkish Army he seemed to know too much, more than the General Staff would believe; and about the plots and politics of Syria his knowledge proved invaluable. He had a flair for detective work, and could usually reduce to candour any disingenuous visitor, by showing that he recognised his dialect, and was acquainted with his neighbours. On this degraded level of diplomacy, treachery was rather the rule than

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the exception. A story is told of a revolutionary society in Egypt, all of whose members severally came to Lawrence, offering to betray the names of their colleagues, his chief anxiety being to prevent their meeting one another on the stairs. Though hero-worshippers demand that his life should provide a succession of hair-raising stories, it is more reasonable to picture Lawrence scamping his mealtimes and his sleeping times at a Cairo hotel, in order to spend long hours at an office desk, correcting maps, analysing statistics, comparing and checking reports; and producing for his military superiors a wealth of information which they were inclined to discount. The young man was altogether too knowing.

In the story of the Great War, 1915 is the year of Eastern adventures, when statesmen on both sides tried to find some way out of the deadlock in France, by campaigns further East: for England, a problem of using sea-power. In Mr Churchill's phrase we might strike 'at Constantinople, the heart of Turkey, or at her arm-pit at Alexandretta, or her elbow at Haifa, but we began at her finger-tips', at Aden and in the Persian Gulf. On their part, the Turks could strike at the Suez Canal, which might be de-

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scribed, in a similar metaphor, as England's solar plexus. Early in 1915, the German general, Kress von Kressenstein, made an attack on the Canal, and, by his mere presence in Sinai, succeeded in locking up more and more troops in the Egyptian garrison. A month later came the first British attacks on the Dardanelles, where Army and Navy spent their strength, in vain, against the Turks for the rest of the year. January, 1916, saw a huge British army withdrawn from Gallipoli, in admission of failure. The war in the East had to begin again, and with divided counsels.

Lawrence seems to have been concerned that winter in two attempts to win over Turkish auxiliaries by bribes. When the Turks proclaimed the Holy War, the Senussi of Western Egypt were among the few desert tribes to take up arms, with the help of German money and Turkish officers. In November, 1915, an unsuccessful attempt was made by a political mission (in which Lawrence perhaps played a part) to induce them, for a consideration, to return to their Egyptian allegiance. Later, the Senussi were defeated in a spirited campaign, in which their commander, Jaafar Pasha (now Irak



Minister in London), was cut down and taken prisoner by the Dorset Yeomanry.

Meanwhile Enver had concentrated the best of his troops in the Caucasus. Readers of John Buchan's *Greenmantle*, a story partly founded on fact, will remember the Russian advance on Erzerum, which was captured in February, 1916, after an almost bloodless victory. It has been hinted that diplomacy rather than fighting brought about the Turkish retirement; and in this backstairs negotiation Lawrence is said to have played a part. His next known exploit was of a similar nature, but a failure.

Seven hundred miles eastward across the desert from Suez, another British army was concentrating to make a counter-stroke after another Turkish victory. While the War Office conducted the Gallipoli campaign, and the Government of Egypt the defence of the Suez Canal, the Indian Government was conducting an independent war against the Turks in Mesopotamia. Somewhat light-heartedly, they had landed troops to protect the Persian oil-fields, then, encouraged by successes, had moved them up the Tigris, until General Townshend had advanced on Baghdad. The Turks, fighting here much better than at Erzerum, had brought up reinforcements who defeated Townshend and besieged

him, in December, 1915, at Kut-el-Amara. If Townshend should surrender, and there seemed no hope of saving his army, this second blow, following the failure at Gallipoli, might be fatal to British prestige in India and Egypt.

At Townshend's suggestion, an attempt was made to ransom the besieged garrison. Captain Aubrey Herbert, M.P., was sent, with Lawrence, and Colonel Beach, to parley with the Turkish commander, an interview which they neither relished, nor expected to be successful. At Basra, on his way up to the front, Lawrence met his old friend Young, who found him disappointing. Both were junior staff officers working at the base behind defeated armies; one, the professional soldier full of enthusiasm and delighted with his work; the other, the amateur, a disgusted critic of all that had been and all that was being done. The Mesopotamian campaign was ill-planned and ill-conducted, and failed chiefly in that quarter where Lawrence's interests lay. So far as there was any further policy beyond the conquest of Baghdad, it was generally supposed in the army, that Mesopotamia would become a province of the Indian Empire. Its Arab inhabitants, hardly differentiated from their Turkish masters, were treated as a conquered people; and retaliated by hostility to the British soldiers,

who spoke of ' Marsh Arabs ' as mere brigands. In Mesopotamia there was no sympathy with the scheme for an Arab Revolt.

The soldiers could not conceal their contempt for Lawrence's mission; Sir Percy Cox, the chief political officer, thought it impolitic and washed his hands of it; Herbert, though he knew and liked the Turks, was pessimistic; Lawrence was sure their errand would fail, because Khalil, the Turkish general, was Enver's nephew and too rich to be easily corrupted. Herbert has described their useless visit: how they raised their flag of truce in No Man's Land and were taken to Khalil, Herbert riding blindfold on a bucking horse, Lawrence limping blindfold through the mud, for he had hurt his knee and could not ride; how they sat in a small tent where Lawrence, running with sweat, wrote down their reports while swarms of flies crawled over his hands and face and note-paper. Khalil was young, suave, and stony-hearted. He brushed aside their offer of a million pounds to allow Townshend's men some sort of honourable escape; he would accept no surrender on parole, would promise nothing for the Arab townsmen. Herbert was then instructed to raise the offer to two million pounds, though whether as a public indemnity or as a private bribe is not clear; whereupon Khalil,

with dignity, proclaimed to all the world, except the censored English Press, that English gold had failed to win back what had been lost by English arms. All that the three Englishmen could accomplish was the exchange of a few wounded prisoners. On April 29th, 1916, General Townshend was reduced to unconditional surrender. He was taken into nominal captivity; his men, robbed, starved, beaten, and outraged, were marched off in gangs to Asia Minor, where one-third of the Indian soldiers, and two-thirds of the Englishmen died. Those Arab citizens of Kut whom their enemies denounced as having befriended the British, and all the native interpreters with Townshend's army, were hanged after torture.

This was Lawrence's only visit to Mesopotamia during the war, and he returned to Egypt convinced that an Arab Revolt could never be based upon the Mesopotamian campaign. Though the Arab tribes behind the Turks were ripe for rebellion, they would never co-operate with the Indian Army, or be accepted as allies by political officers from India.

On his return he was asked to make a report, which needed censorship before it could be shown to Sir Archibald Murray, who commanded in Egypt, and disliked being told unpleasant

truths. 'He criticised', wrote Major Stirling, 'the quality of the stones used for lithographing, the system of berthing barges, the inefficiency of the cranes for handling stores, the lack of system in shunting and entraining on the railways, the want of adequate medical stores, the blindness of the medical authorities and their want of imagination as to their probable requirements. And, horror of horrors, he criticised the Higher Command and the conduct of the campaign in general!' Lawrence's antipathy to the regular soldiers was now at its hottest, and in Egypt there was no lack of opportunity for disagreeing with them. Brass hats abounded in Alexandria, the headquarters of three armies, the Levant Base, the Egyptian Army, and another army, consisting chiefly of Gallipoli veterans, who were being reorganised in Egypt under Sir Archibald Murray. A story is told of Lawrence giggling behind a screen in a Cairo ante-room, as he counted the generals assembling for a conference — 'sixty-three, sixty-four . . .'.

Early in 1916, Murray was given the general command and many of the superfluous troops were drafted off to Salonica or France. For those that were left, Murray arranged a scheme for advancing to the borders of Palestine, where, he estimated, a force of moderate size could pre-

vent a Turkish attack far more economically than by lining the banks of the Suez Canal, as the Egyptian Army had done. Murray was an orthodox and an efficient soldier, whose reputation is, perhaps, less than it deserves; but in a life of Lawrence he must appear as the villain. He misunderstood and disliked the Arab cause; he was content in Egypt to carry out the instructions he received from the War Office, without bothering about the confused politics of the Middle East. It fell to the High Commissioner, Sir Henry MacMahon, to negotiate with the Arabs, and for that purpose, to depend on the little group of specialists whom Clayton had gathered round him. In February, they were transferred from military to civil control, and organised by Hogarth, as the Arab Bureau, a small and seemingly insignificant department, which gradually came to dominate British relations with Turks and Arabs.

Lawrence, though deep in their counsels, was left behind on Murray's staff, out of his element. His reports were watered down before they reached the Commander-in-Chief, and he was not more popular because he was consistently right when his superiors were wrong. Worst of all was his unsoldierly appearance. What could be made of a staff officer in 'slacks', without a

‘Sam Browne’ belt? He was reduced to the necessity of asserting himself by correcting the grammar and criticising the style of official documents, and giving facetious replies to foolish questions from above. Means might have been found of crushing this insubordinate junior, but his knowledge was too valuable to neglect, when the long-threatened Arab Revolt at last broke out.

Early in 1916 the patience of the conspirators had been over-strained. The Young Turk Commander in Syria, Jemal Pasha, had chosen his time to scotch an insurrection in the north. He had laid his hand upon the Arab leaders and had hanged them, just when his colleague in Mesopotamia was doing likewise at Kut-el-Amara. As a hostage for the behaviour of the southern Arabs he held in pretended friendship, Feisal, the third son of Hussein of Mecca, and, with refined humour, knowing very well that Feisal was playing him false, took him as a spectator to the hanging of his friends. For the time, there was no more fear of revolt in the north; the discontented lay low and dreaded the intervention of the British, which would expose them again to the vengeance of Jemal. There was, however, still a secret society of Arab officers in the Turkish Army, who looked for the day when they might

overthrow their masters without foreign aid. Some of them regarded Jemal's victims with contempt as half-hearted patriots who only desired to oust the Turks by calling in the French or British.

Feisal was European-bred, at Constantinople; but before he became an officer in the Turkish Army and a Member of the Turkish Parliament, his father had summoned him back to the desert, to ride out with the Bedouin. Alone of the Arab leaders in the war, he understood both worlds, Europe and Arabia; and, like Lawrence, he found his allegiance divided between the two. Feisal had visited the Turkish lines in Gallipoli, to take the measure of the two armies, and after the British failures, there and in Mesopotamia, he used his influence to postpone a revolt. When Feisal could restrain his father no longer, he escaped from Damascus and began the Arab Revolt at Medina, on June 5th, 1916.

Hussein, head of the Sherifs, the family descended from Mohammed, hereditary guardian of the two Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina, intended to make himself Caliph of Islam and Emperor of all the Arabs. The district he ruled, the Holy Province of the Hejaz, consists of the mountainous slopes breaking down to the Red Sea coast of Arabia. A barren land, yet not



desert, it was in ancient times known as *Arabia Felix*, and was 'bright with many an incense-bearing tree'. To the port of Jedda came ships from the East bringing pilgrims yearly from India, while there were two routes northward, the Hejaz railway from Medina running inland along the plateau, and the coast-line, with its string of wretched villages linked by rough tracks to the head of the Gulf of Akaba, where they joined the caravan-route from Egypt. The steep broken ranges were anciently known as the Land of Midian. Beyond the Hejaz railway extended the wastes of *Arabia Deserta*, high-lying and almost waterless, the stony desert in the north, the sandy desert, never at that time visited by any European, in the south, the whole forming a parallelogram three times the size of France. Even the driest deserts were not No Man's Land. Certain less barren patches, and lines of water-holes, inland from the Hejaz, were visited seasonally by Bedouin tribes, who claimed to be the lords of whole desert areas, and had little respect for the Turks or for the Sherifs of Mecca.

Among these, Ibn Saud, ruler of the Puritanical sect called the Wahabis was, like Hussein, ill-disposed to the Turks and well-disposed to the British. Some, who know Arabia well, think that the Arab Revolt might have been organised

under Ibn Saud, from the other side of the desert had not Captain Shakespear, whom the Indian Government sent from the Persian Gulf to influence him, been killed in a tribal skirmish. The inland Bedouin enjoyed telling Lawrence, when his time came, of Shakespear's earlier exploits, but Lawrence never supposed that the Army in Mesopotamia could be persuaded to do for Ibn Saud what the Army in Egypt did for Hussein. The ubiquitous, omniscient members of the Arab Bureau knew the political difficulties in both countries, and knew their men. After Herbert and Lawrence, two more emissaries from the Bureau, Lloyd and Storrs (now Sir Ronald Storrs), went to Mesopotamia to co-ordinate the Arab policy of the two British armies, but in vain. Ibn Saud would not co-operate with Hussein, and the Indian Government would not declare for Arab independence. There was nothing for it but to make the best of Hussein, and expect little help from Mesopotamia beyond diplomatic pressure on Ibn Saud.

Perhaps the Arab Bureau over-estimated the prestige of the Sherifs of Mecca, and, for that reason, were willing to bear with Hussein's insensate pride and ambition and obstinacy; but they were right in seeing how English sea-power could be used to support the revolt in the Hejaz,

with Hussein in the East, the Foreign Office had sent Sir Mark Sykes to make terms with France, whose representative was M. Picot. In May, 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was secretly accepted by England, France, Russia and Italy. The whole Arab area from the Taurus Mountains to the Persian Gulf, all that district which the Germans had hoped to control by means of the Berlin to Baghdad Railway, was to be controlled instead by England and France. Northern Syria was to be a French Protectorate; Southern Mesopotamia a British Protectorate; between the two, the Arab area was to consist of 'an independent Arab State, or a Federation of States', divided again into a French 'zone of influence' and a British 'zone of influence'. The city of Damascus (it should be remembered) fell in the independent area, and the French zone of influence. Although the partition of Turkey was not eventually carried out as laid down in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, all the difficulties which arose later are derived from it. The Agreement was negotiated in London without consideration of MacMahon's previous agreement with Hussein, and without consideration of what the Indian Government intended in Mesopotamia. Worst of all it was kept secret, until, eighteen months later, the Bolsheviks published it with other secret

treaties, in order to embarrass the French and British Governments.

On Sykes' advice general instructions were issued for the occupation of Sinai. Murray was to advance along the coast to El Arish; the revolting Arabs were to drive the Turks away from the Gulf of Akaba. The Arab Revolt began, then, with the support of Sir Henry MacMahon and of Hogarth's Arab Bureau; but with the hostility of the Commanders-in-Chief in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Behind the back of MacMahon, the British Government had already betrayed Arab freedom to the French. It was another misfortune that, on the day when Feisal raised the standard of revolt at Medina, June 5th, 1916, the best friend of the Arabs, Lord Kitchener; was drowned in the North Sea.

Hussein and his four sons, Ali, Abdulla, Feisal, and Zeid, now declared open war on the Turks. Hussein, himself, seized Mecca, by a *coup d'état*, after some street fighting in which the handful of Turks were foolish enough to shell the Ka'aba itself and to kill some pilgrims within a few yards of the sacred Black Stone. The main local garrison, a few miles away in the hills, surrendered some weeks later to Abdulla, the king's second son. From the five thousand prisoners taken in these skirmishes many hundreds, who were

Arabs, volunteered to change sides, and so began Hussein's little regular army, not, at first, of much military value. There were few arms or stores, very little money, and no instructors, while every volunteer, with true Arab egoism, expected to be an officer. Meanwhile, there had been shocking failure at Medina, where Feisal had found his Bedouin followers quite unwilling to face fire. The large Turkish garrison in Medina was commanded by Fakhri Pasha, a regular Turk, who was to remain unconquered, though beleaguered for thirty months in the heart of Arabia. Feisal riding up and down among the shellfire, which was trifling compared to what he had seen in Gallipoli, could not persuade the Arabs to attack the city. On the other hand some of them tried to surrender to the Turks, thus giving Fakhri a chance to crush the revolt by terrorism. While the negotiations went on, he privily moved his men into the suburb of the town which had risen for Feisal; and burned it, after slaying every man, woman and child in it, the historic Turkish mode of warfare. The Arabs looked on war quite differently; to them it spelt excitement and loot, at the cost of a little inevitable bloodshed, and they spared women and children, as a rule. But they were not so easily intimidated as the peaceful Syrians, and were

ready to maintain the war—out of range of the Turkish guns.

Hussein now was clamorous for the promised British aid, before Fakhri should take advantage of his victory at Medina to recover Mecca; and here was the chance of the Arab Bureau. Hogarth, himself, was secretly in the Hejaz when these events took place, and sent back to Egypt for rifles, and guns with Moslem gunners, as Christian soldiers could hardly be sent into the Holy Province. But it was the Navy that gave the first real help. Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, the admiral in those waters, was an independent commander, free of the political entanglements which tied the hands of the soldiers in Egypt, and free, too, of the red tape in which they tied their own hands. With aeroplane bombing, and gunfire from his ships, he soon induced the Turks to surrender the port of Jedda to the Arabs; and allowed the landing there, on June 27th, of two mountain batteries under an Egyptian Moslem officer. Still the revolt languished. Feisal gloomily sat before Medina, which he dared not again attack; while the eldest of the brothers, Ali, beaten in a Turkish counter-attack, was content to fall back on the coast to enjoy the bounty of the English Navy. If the Turks were to make a bold advance the Arabs could still be easily crushed; for the

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Arabs it was essential that their revolt should not decline into that hopeless proposition, 'a rebellion on the Defensive'.

At this stage Lawrence appeared on the scene. He had applied to be transferred from General Murray's staff to the Arab Bureau; and, while waiting for the change to be gazetted, he accompanied Ronald Storrs on a visit to the Arabs at Jedda. They landed on October 16th, 1916.

## CHAPTER III

### THE REVOLT IN THE HEJAZ

LAWRENCE was not the first British officer to join the rebel army, nor did he reach his dominant position for several months after his first visit to Jedda. Colonel Wilson had already organised there a base, through which stores from Port Sudan were sent across the Red Sea to the Arabs. Hard on his heels came a French military mission led by Colonel Brémont, a soldier with a fine record of fighting service in French Africa and on the western front; as yet, he did no more than ingratiate the Arabs with generous gifts from France. Then the Navy planted along the coast a flight of aeroplanes at Rabegh, and Egyptian batteries at Yenbo, to support the tribesmen who were out in the hills with Emir Feisal.

Storrs and Lawrence came to Jedda, not to join these contingents, but as diplomatic agents; and Lawrence to play his first lone hand. If this disintegrating local insurrection were to be more than an English 'side-show', if it were to be inflated into a national revolution, he must find a national leader; and since England was now committed to the cause of Hussein, that leader



must be one of Hussein's sons, the four Emirs. Abdulla, the second son, was not the man. Lawrence met him at Jedda and found him a merry, full-faced, talkative, easy-going princeling, without energy or fire. Zeid, the fourth son, was too young. Ali, the eldest, whom he visited at Rabegh, was an invalid. The third, Emir Feisal, was facing the Turks far up in the hills of the Holy Province, where no Christian could safely go. After long wrangling over the telephone with Hussein at Mecca, Lawrence got permission to ride, for the first time, up the Pilgrims' Road to Feisal's camp. Their meeting, the moment when the flint of Lawrence's will struck fire from the tempered steel of Feisal's chivalrous nature, has become historic: the darkened room, filled with silent desert chiefs, the tall figure of the Sherif with mask-like face, black beard, and white silk robes, the formal compliments exchanged with this unexpected infidel.

'And how do you like our place here in Wadi Safra?'

'Well; but it is far from Damascus.'

In the pause which followed, the unspoken compact was made between the two, who were to fight and intrigue their way together through seven hundred miles of desert, over the wreckage

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of a Turkish Army, until, just two years after their meeting in Wadi Safra, Feisal entered Damascus in triumph.

‘ Praise be to God ’, said Feisal, replying like a soldier, ‘ there are Turks nearer to us than that.’

Lawrence had found the prophet, and in the next few days made up his own mind how to use him. He went about Feisal’s camp, noticing how ill-assorted were the civilised Egyptian gunners with the Bedouin; how his own British uniform estranged him from the Arabs; how discreetly they must be handled if even the semblance of command was to be preserved. Feisal’s high breeding, and natural courtesy, refined in the school of Turkish diplomacy, enabled him to control the desert chiefs, by his endless patience for the niceties of Bedouin etiquette, his faultless remembrance of their ranks and relationships and feuds. In daily audiences he was always accessible, but, at other times, remote and secretive, in a way that was unusual among the easy, promiscuous, tented tribes. Though capable of hard work and violent action, his was not a forceful nature: he was more diplomat than soldier. A weak, brave, whole-hearted man, he was the perfect instrument for Lawrence’s purpose, and it was among the first of Lawrence’s self-reproaches that he found himself making a

tool of a man he so much admired. He was envious of Feisal's single-heartedness, and despised himself for turning to his own ends a virtue in another which he could not find in himself.

Lawrence returned to Egypt to report to Clayton, leaving behind him the seed of a plan of campaign, which lay, for the present, infertile in Feisal's mind, but was cultivated by Colonel Wilson at Jedda. The Turkish counter-attack might be forestalled and the initiative pass again to the Arabs if Abdulla, now blockading Medina on the inland, desert side would cut the railway north of the town. Feisal then might move up the coast, again depending on the British Navy, to make a new base at Wejh. If the whole strength of the Arabs were concentrated north of the Turkish armies, there would be no fear of their pressing southward towards Mecca.

The problem before the General Staff was to decide whether to send British troops into the Hejaz in support of the Arabs, as all the best-informed soldiers on the spot demanded. Murray had unwillingly concentrated several thousand men to go to Rabegh, and Colonel Brémond, who fancied he might get control of the whole expedition, had some Algerian batteries of guns at Suez; but the War Office in London, with General Murray's hearty agreement, was op-

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posed to any such move. After the failures at Gallipoli in 1915, and at Kut in 1916, they were most unwilling to divert men from France for any new campaign, with unlimited liability, in the East. Even if Murray had not been an orthodox 'western-front' general, he would still have preferred to keep his men under his own hand for the cautious advance he was preparing along the coast towards Palestine, and not to disperse them on this wild-goose chase in Arabia. He was astonished to discover that Captain Lawrence was on his side, if not of his opinion. On his return to Cairo, the Chief of Staff had seen Lawrence; had attempted to patronise him by talking about Oxford, as if Lawrence were still the undergraduate he appeared to be; and had sent him to the General, who was, he said, nervous and worried, and must not be given false impressions by exaggerated news. The General, though Lawrence described him as 'all claws and brains', was not ungracious. He readily agreed with Lawrence that the Arabs would resent the intrusion of Christian armies into the Holy Province, and would suspect England's motives. Lawrence made it clear that he, himself, suspected the motives of France, and had dropped Colonel Brémont a hint to that effect. The Arabs wanted guns and stores and money,

which Murray willingly supplied, since he was delighted with what he heard. Lawrence, finding himself for once the favourite of the General, had two strings to pull, but neither Feisal nor Murray knew himself to be a puppet dancing to the tune played by this oddly impressive little man.

He had not been long back at his Cairo office, when Clayton ordered him to return to the Hejaz with Colonel Newcombe, his old leader in the Sinai Survey, as military advisers to Emir Feisal. Lawrence strenuously objected, asking that a soldier should be given this soldier's task. Though nominally a captain, he had never so much as drilled a platoon, and knew no more of practical soldiering than he had learned in the Oxford O.T.C. Here at the Arab Bureau, among his maps and files, he was doing the work for which he was fitted, printing confidential papers, in which he took a typographer's interest, and issuing the *Arab Bulletin*, his periodical report on Arab politics. But he was overruled, and whimsically consoled himself by remembering that he had read Saxe, and Jomini, and Clausewitz, and Foch, even if he had never commanded a company. He rejoined Feisal on January 1st, 1917, in the midst of another set-back.

Some Turkish manœuvre had threatened to

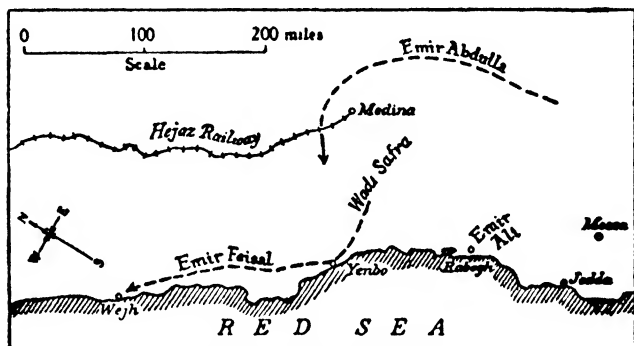
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outflank the Arabs and sent them tumbling back towards Yenbo. Lawrence conferred with Feisal, sitting surrounded by jostling men and beasts until they were interrupted by the upsetting of a camel-load of hay over Lawrence's head. 'God be praised', said Feisal gravely, 'that it was neither butter nor bags of gold.' With similar quiet humour he calmed the unreliable sheikhs who had left their outposts. Nevertheless, it was necessary to fall back on Yenbo before the Turks cut off their retreat. Again the Arabs refused to face gunfire, and the Turks, if they had pushed on, might then have put an end to Feisal's army and the Arab Revolt at one blow. This was not Lawrence's responsibility. The town was put in a state of defence by Major Garland, an engineer officer, and was protected by warships lying in the roadstead. The Turks shrank from attacking the barbed wire across a plain lit up by the ship's searchlights, and on that night, said Lawrence, lost their war. Feisal's army lay safe, under British protection, and, if the other British officers had a very low opinion of the fighting power of the Arabs, Lawrence had begun to see how they ought to be employed.

A few days later Abdulla took up his station astride the Hejaz Railway north of Medina, and at once neutralised the threat to the coastal

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towns. Feisal was free to move, to mount the first step of the ladder which would lead him to Damascus, at each step persuading another Arab tribe to join the Revolt without fear of



The Campaign in the Hejaz, 1916-1917.

Turkish reprisal, at each step drawing nearer to the converging British invasion of Palestine. On January 18th, he began to march north along the coast, accompanied by two British officers, Lawrence and Vickery, who were on very bad terms with each other. As Lawrence had no experience of desert warfare, beyond a single patrol carried out a few days before, and Vickery was a tried old soldier, it is not surprising that he resented the younger man's cock-sure manner. Vickery knew that the Arabs would never face

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entrenched Turks at Wejh, and he was right; but Lawrence knew that Wejh could be taken by a bold threat from the land, if it were also bombarded from the sea. The Navy was to do the work, and the Arabs, for reasons of policy, were to be given the credit. What was needed was to get the Arabs moving northwards and to put heart into them by some sort of a victory.

With boyish enthusiasm, Lawrence set out on his first march with an Arab army. He delighted in Feisal's ceremonious mounting after prayer; his banners of faded crimson silk; the twelve hundred gaudy ruffians of his own following, Ageyls, the homeless camel-breeding tribe, whom Kress had led, a year before, against the British in Sinai; the mob of camels like a river filling each narrow *wadi* from bank to bank; the regimental poets singing and improvising rhymes to which the Ageyl replied in chorus; and the contrast between himself the amateur, and Vickery the professional, who had every card in his hand except Lawrence's trump card, an intuitive knowledge how to use the disorderly tribes. When Newcombe, who was senior to both, joined their march, his tact smoothed away difficulties: Lawrence's plans were carried out, and the unfortunate Vickery was cast for the part of leading into action a corps which was sure to melt away as



tributes in the *Seven Pillars*. His first duty in the campaign against the railway was to stir the indolent Abdulla into activity, before the Turks retreated, as they threatened to do, beyond his reach. If they withdrew altogether from the Hejaz and reinforced their army in Palestine, Murray would be defeated and would bring down the Arabs with him in general ruin. This was Lawrence's second lone hand. Again he rode up into the hills with a small body-guard but this time turned southward towards Medina.

In the back of his mind certain doubts about the part he was playing, whether it was wise or honourable, began to rankle; his sensitive conscience reproached him for making the Arabs the catspaws of British policy. Further, his body was racked with dysentery, and as if this were not enough he was called upon to execute justice against one of his body-guard who fell out with another and murdered him during a midday halt. Consumed though he was with bodily and mental misery, Lawrence saw that he alone, the outlander with no kin against whom a feud could lie, must requite blood with blood. Though he was to take so many lives, and to live so long amid scenes of bloodshed, Lawrence had a horror of violence. With infinite reluctance he forced himself to shoot the murderer, twice through the

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body, with his revolver. Among the many gruesome incidents described with almost morbid minuteness in the *Seven Pillars*, he recounts only one other tale of his killing a man, a wounded friend, to save him from falling alive into the hands of the Turks. It was a very sick and unhappy man that collapsed in Abdulla's camp after delivering his message.

During the ten days, in March 1917, which he spent lying up, a revelation came to him. Pondering over his experiences of the last six months, and recalling his half-forgotten amateur studies in strategy, he was able to think out a scheme of guerrilla warfare, and to apply his principles logically to the problems of the Hejaz campaign; whereupon it came to him suddenly that the war in the Hejaz was won already. All the soldiers, and he, too, until that moment, had been obsessed with the nineteenth-century notion of strategy; they had been blind to everything except to concentrating against the Turkish army at Medina. Perhaps in the west, where one nation-in-arms was arrayed against another, this was the true conception, and requisite to the ultimate aims of the combatants; but not so in Arabia. The Arabs not only could not beat the Turks in fair fight, but they need not. Their aims were to exclude the Turks from Arabia, and to

preserve their own skins; two aims alike unattainable by a bloody battle. On the other hand, they had already set free ninety-nine hundredths of the Holy Province at the cost of very little bloodshed. Instead of shedding their blood in vain attempts to destroy the beleaguered Turkish Armies, it would be wiser to keep them occupied with pin-pricks, and meanwhile to set free other Arab provinces by extending the bloodless campaign. Lawrence now made up his mind to prevent Abdulla from attacking Medina. Twenty thousand Turks were locked up there and in fortified posts along the railway, and there they might well stay, out of mischief. If so, the Hejaz Railway must be kept working, but only just working; the Turks were harder put to it for materials than for men. The best way to wear down their strength was to keep the repair gangs running from one damaged section of rail to another, but not to destroy the railway altogether, for that would force the Turks to fight their way out an unwanted battle. Lawrence never quite made his colleagues or his superiors understand his new policy: he no longer wanted to take Medina, nor to cut the Hejaz Railway. Let them fall ripe to his hand in due time.

Afterwards Lawrence would amuse and annoy the other officers with the whimsical mock-

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pedantry of his strategic ideas. He divided the subject into (1) *hecastics*, the mathematical element in war, the calculation of numbers and distances, an exact science; and (2) *bionomics*, the wear and tear in materials and men, a less manageable factor, depending on the flair of the commander who might in this branch achieve the unexpected; and (3) *diathetics*, the psychological understanding of an army. Here Lawrence, and Lawrence alone among the British officers, knew the Arabs. More important, *diathetically*, than beating the Turks, was welding the Arabs into a nation, and into something quite unlike a European nation. Arab freedom suggested to a Frenchman or an Englishman the organisation of an Arab State; to a Bedouin it meant no more than the absence of a foreign governor.

How then should the independent Arabs, impatient of control, unwilling to combine, be *bionomically* employed? What they lacked in discipline they made up in mobility, endurance, range of action. Though twenty thousand Arabs could not fight ten thousand Turks, ten Arabs were more than a match for twenty, if only because they could make rings round them. The Arabs then ought to use the smallest possible bodies of highly equipped troops, and to dis-

tribute their activity so widely as to make the Turks string out their garrisons in expensive forts all along the railway line. By moving five times as fast as the Turks, the Arabs multiplied their strength by five.

Victory then became mathematically certain, a matter of *hecastics*. The Arab cards to play were speed and time, not hitting power. 'Range is more to strategy than force.' Their tactics should be 'tip-and-run, to use the smallest force, in the quickest time, at the farthest place'. The war would be less like soldiering than like naval tactics; their camel-parties might cruise along the frontier of the sown lands, striking where they would and disappearing into the desert, like cruisers into the ocean. Such a war would suit the Arabs, every one of whom preferred to strike for his own hand; and they would require little direction beyond simple training in the use of explosives. One Englishman to each thousand Arabs would be enough, and would fall in with Arab ways, because, 'luckily, every young Englishman has the roots of eccentricity in him'.

When Lawrence had come to these conclusions and shaken off his ten days' sickness, he put his case to Emir Abdulla for a line of action just the opposite of what he had come to propound; but got small encouragement. Abdulla was content

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with his easy victories, and would put himself to no further trouble. He needed no dissuading, because he had never been persuaded of the necessity of taking Medina by storm; nor was he much interested in raiding the railway. There was in his camp a chief named Shakir who willingly rode out with Lawrence on an experiment in train-wrecking. On March 28th, 1917, for the first time, Lawrence felt beneath his fingers the rails of the Hejaz line; but next morning, when a train steamed out, the mine blew up late, doing it only slight damage, and Shakir's men failed to open fire. Two days later, they tried again, and this time the mine failed altogether, obliging Lawrence to scabble in the ballast for the firing action which would probably—but didn't—blow him up when he found it. In these two raids he had cut rails, pulled down telegraph wires and destroyed a culvert, stopping railway traffic for three days, but had not bagged a train. In April he returned to Feisal's camp, to find more British officers and stores, great activity against the railway, and high hopes of attacking Medina.

The time was ripe for advance, since news had just come in that General Maude on one side of the desert had taken Baghdad, while on the other side of it Murray had advanced to the

frontiers of Palestine, and, after a check, was preparing his second attack on Gaza, with gas, and tanks, and heavy artillery. Not yet was Lawrence's prestige great enough for him to convert his senior officers to his new scheme: he was still a Secret Service officer with little fighting experience, even in desert raids. Since Colonel Joyce, the senior officer, would not fall in with his plans, Lawrence determined to play his third lone hand. He wrote over the head of his immediate superior to his old chief, Clayton, at Cairo, saying that he was off on an expedition northward, to raise the tribes about Akaba, and slipped away.

Feisal's army had been reinforced by the coming of Auda, the fiercest of the desert chiefs, a Saracen out of those old books of chivalry which Lawrence had read when studying the Crusades. He had slain seventy-five men in fair fight, 'not counting Turks'; had married twenty-eight times; was at feud with almost every other tribe in the desert, which gave scope for raiding east or west; was as boastful as brave, and as fantastic as either. To his friends, among whom Lawrence was soon numbered, he was benevolence itself. Lawrence played tricks on him and chaffed him, as no other man in Arabia would have dared to do; he nick-named Lawrence 'the World's Imp'.

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With their chief came in his tribe, a section of the *Howeitat*, whom all settled folk on the borders of the desert regarded as robbers and murderers. Thirty-five years earlier some of them had treacherously killed Edward Palmer in Sinai; now Lawrence set out with them on a similar task, a solitary Englishman on a camel laden with gold.

With them there rode three other leaders of the Arabs, Nasir, a Sherif from Medina of great lineage and wealth, who had left his gardens and his slaves in the hands of the Turks to fight the campaign from the first shot to the last, and two Syrian Arabs, who were to spread the revolt in their own country. Starting with a handful of Auda's men and Nasir's, carrying forty-five days' rations and twenty thousand sovereigns (the 'horsemen of Saint George', matchless as recruiting agents for the cause), they rode inland, halting two or three days at an outpost across the ranges to tend mangy camels.

On the tenth day out they crossed the railway line, and stopped to pull down telegraph wires, attaching the broken ends to a team of six stampeding camels; and blew up many rails, to the delight of old Auda, who had not seen dynamite before. Then out for four days across the empty desert without more than a pint or



two of water for each man. There was among them a man named Gasim, whom the others hated. Lawrence noticed that he was missing and turned back through blinding mirages to find him by a lucky chance, lost, and nearly dead with heat and thirst. Then Auda turned in fury not to look for Gasim but to look for Lawrence, having learned Lawrence's determination to out-do the sons of the desert in all the physical feats to which they had been bred, and to exceed them in their own virtues of clan loyalty.

Next day they reached their first goal, the Wadi Sirhan, a chain of oases and water-holes running diagonally across the desert for several hundred miles, a refuge to which their raiding parties could withdraw, if they had the goodwill of Nuri Shaalan, lord of that part of Arabia. He counted himself as great a prince as Hussein or Ibn Saud, and without his *Rualla* tribesmen the Revolt could not be carried farther north. At its Syrian end, guarded by the Saracen Castle of Azrak, the Wadi Sirhan ran out into the settled lands, not yet ripe for revolution. At its Arabian end, in the Sandy Desert, the Wadi passed into the territory of Ibn Rashid, Nuri's enemy, and the only great chief who was faithful to the Turks. On the night when Lawrence and his party camped in the Wadi Sirhan they lost a man

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sniped by raiders from Ibn Rashid's tribe. Nuri, between the Turks and his tribal enemies, could give no direct help as yet. It was an easy journey up the Wadi to Nebk, which was to be their standing camp for several weeks, their only losses being several men bitten by snakes which infested the lower levels. At each halt tribes rode in to give their allegiance to the Arab cause, to receive gifts of gold, and to leave behind them tributes of vermin, which caused misery to the civilised skins of Lawrence and Nasir. Their stomachs also suffered, for each arrival was the occasion for feasts of mutton and rice and camel-calf, from which it was gross rudeness to turn away while any food was in the dish.

Auda rode off to the oasis of Jauf, where Nuri Shaalan dwelt in remote grandeur, smoothing his path with a judicious present of six thousand pounds, enough to get permission to use the Wadi Sirhan, and to recruit some *Rualla* horsemen from the clans nearest the railway. Nasir used gold and diplomacy with other neighbouring tribes. All went so well that the two volatile Syrians began to build castles in the air, planning an immediate march on Damascus. Such wordy optimists, thought Lawrence, would let their mangy camels die of neglect, while planning the future State Veterinary Service for

a liberated Syria. His part was now to restrain their ardour, to fix their efforts on the first step, the capture of Akaba, which would make them the right flank of General Murray's encumbered advance. His conscience pricked him again when he considered that he was binding these free nomads to the British chariot-wheel, and to do it must deceive them all. He must play on the jealousy between Auda and Nasir, to prevent them from combining in some premature campaign; and persuade them both not to be misled by town-bred Syrians. Then it occurred to him that rumours of a raid far to the north would disperse the Turkish garrisons still wider, distracting their attention from his real objective, Akaba; so that it seemed wise to satisfy the Syrians, men of words not deeds, by sending them off with two bags of gold, on a plotting expedition which was sure to end in talk.

For the moment there was nothing for Lawrence to do in Wadi Sirhan. As was his custom, he tried to ease his mind by wearing out his body in a solitary fortnight's ride far away to the north, two hundred miles and back, perhaps the boldest of all his exploits, to Baalbek, beyond Damascus. There, the Turks reported, about the date of his visit, a railway bridge was blown up by some unknown person. This was the ground he had

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known so well in his Carchemish days, where he could make his way from friend to friend; but in that land of mixed faiths and races he used no disguise. Rumour credits him with entering Damascus openly in British uniform, and, more credibly, with meeting in secret Ali Riza, the Arab officer, whom the Turks still trusted as commander of the garrison. Somewhere east of the Dead Sea he was betrayed while in the tents of the *Beni Sakr* tribe (who were to fail Allenby wretchedly in 1918), but escaped in the darkness. Where else he went is not known, except to those who have read the unpublished papers of the Arab Bureau. On June 16th he was back at Nebk, where Nasir and Auda had assembled a force of Bedouin for the march on Akaba.

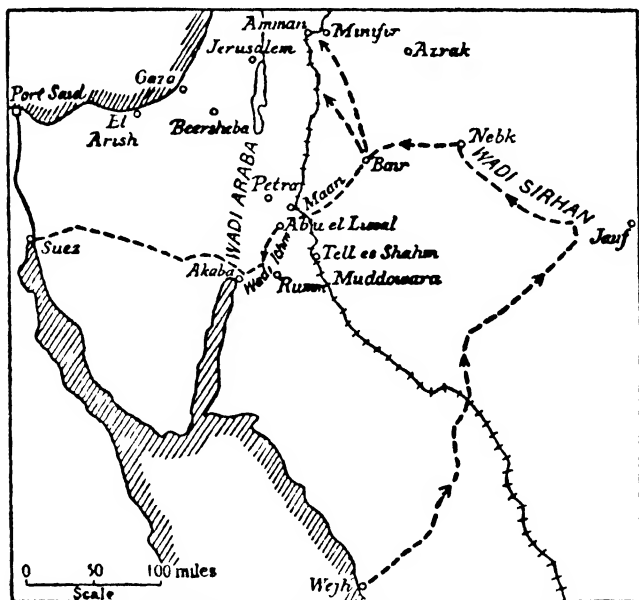
All along the railway line to Damascus and beyond, the Turks were on the alert, for it was no secret that the desert tribes were up. Lawrence kept them dispersed by feints towards Deraa, the junction by which the Turkish army in Palestine was fed, far north of his real goal. The Arabs moved out of the Wadi Sirhan to the oasis of Bair, a day's camel-ride from the railway. Three times he pounced upon the railway, and disappeared again into the desert. At Minifir he engaged a column of two hundred Turks mounted on mules, but refused to allow the Arabs to

assault them, not for fear of defeat, but for fear of victory. So proud a capture as two hundred mules would have sent all his tribesmen home satisfied with their booty. At Amman, where the line makes a sharp turn, he stopped railway traffic for six days by blowing up scores of curved rails, specially difficult to replace. At Atwi, the Arabs looted the station after shooting the unsuspecting stationmaster dead as he sat drinking coffee with his friends. By this time the Turks were strengthening their garrisons and had sent a force of cavalry to hunt the raiders down the Wadi Sirhan, which held them no longer. The raiding-party had turned away, south, to another oasis, where the Turks had tried to block the wells, but had bungled the task.

Here they were within striking distance of Ma'an, the focus of the Arab campaign for the rest of the war, a fortified camp, where as many as seven thousand Turks were sometimes stationed, the chief link in the chain of fortified posts along the Hejaz Railway. Its strategic importance lay in its position at the head of a valley, the Wadi Ithm, which ran down through the mountains of Midian to the Gulf of Akaba, and joined with the roads into Palestine and Sinai, the very district which Lawrence had surveyed and mapped in the winter before the War.

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The little Arab force now slipped past the camp of Ma'an, unobserved and unsuspected, to fight their way down the Wadi to Akaba. They



The March on Akaba, April to June, 1917.

crossed the railway south of the fortress, 'delivering', says Lawrence grimly, and says no more of that fight, 'a long stretch of it from guards and patrols', and demolished ten bridges with explosives. A tribe, locally levied and driven to

fury by Turkish frightfulness, had stormed the little blockhouse at the head of the pass, a rare exploit for Arabs, opening the way for further progress, which was stopped by the accidental appearance of a Turkish battalion on the march. Unwillingly and in murdering heat, Lawrence took part in his first battle, the 'Action of Abu el Lissal', June 2nd, 1917. The Turks deployed stupidly in the valley below; Auda's men and Nasir's sniped them from the hills above. All day in blazing sunshine an ineffectual fire of musketry went on, till rifles were too hot to hold, and even Arabs were fainting from heatstroke. When no decision seemed likely, Lawrence, weak with the sun and angry at the futile struggle, crept away to rest by a muddy spring. There Auda joined him to boast of his men's powers. 'By God,' said the exasperated Lawrence, 'they shoot a lot and hit a little.' In a mad rage Auda rushed away to show what he could do, crying, 'Get your camel if you want to see the old man's work'. Then with fifty horsemen he charged down the slope. Nasir, unwilling to be excelled in battle, called for his camel and Lawrence's, and led a charge of four hundred camel-men against the other flank. Three hundred Turks were killed and a hundred and sixty taken prisoner. When Auda came back, his life saved,

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he believed, by the one-and-sixpenny *Koran* which some cheat had sold him as an amulet for a hundred and twenty pounds, his clothes and equipment were riddled with bullet-holes, and his wrath slaked. Lawrence's camel had been shot under him, throwing him forward, where its bulky corpse sheltered him from being ridden over by his friends. When all was over he found his own revolver bullet in the back of his camel's skull—all he tells of his own feats of arms that day.

So elated were the Arabs by their victory that they clamoured to be led against the Turks in Ma'an, but Lawrence would not be diverted from his task. There were three small posts to be taken, down the valley towards Akaba. His first concern was to show kindness to the Turkish prisoners, and his second to let it be known down the valley that prisoners were well treated. These small parties of Turks must be encouraged to surrender, not to fight. Not for Lawrence was there any of the elation of victory which so stirred Auda. A tender, almost a morbid pity for the patient Turkish conscripts, uselessly slaughtered, sent him wandering among their pale stripped corpses looted and left by the Arabs. 'Half in love with easeful death' he lingered among them, straightening their tortured limbs.



The first of the three little garrisons surrendered on learning of the battle at Abu el Lissal; the second stubbornly refused to parley. Lawrence urged the neighbouring tribes to rush the post after dark, which they would not do because the full moon would be too bright. Characteristically, he knew that there was to be an eclipse that night, and promised them sufficient darkness. Superstition thus enlisted on the Arab side gave them an easy victory over the terrified Turks. At the third post, four miles above Akaba, entrenched to defend the mouth of the valley against an attack from the sea, the garrison fell into panic when threatened from the hills. They surrendered, a German officer among them, thus clearing the last obstacle from Lawrence's way. On the 6th of June, two months after setting out from Wejh, Lawrence, Auda, and Nasir led their five hundred followers, their two thousand allies, and their seven hundred Turkish prisoners down to the sea. Akaba, after many naval bombardments, was a deserted ruin; all the food was eaten, and all the money was spent. Neither Feisal at Wejh, nor the British in Suez, knew that Akaba was taken, and Wejh was two hundred miles away, Suez a hundred and fifty across the desert.

## CHAPTER IV

### LAWRENCE AND ALLENBY

LAWRENCE had brought his Arabs to Akaba, and marooned them there. To prevent them quarrelling or merely melting away, he must pay them and feed them, with no one to rely on but himself. His fourth lone hand was his desert ride to Suez, a hundred and fifty miles in fifty hours, after a month in which he had ridden fifty miles every day. He set out with eight men on the best camels, and rode steadily but slowly for two days and nights, without halting, except to water beasts and men at the only well, or for a few minutes to let the camels graze where there was vegetation. In the heat of the third day, they reached the abandoned trenches on the east bank of the Suez Canal, and found a telephone in an empty hut, deserted—though Lawrence did not know it—because of an outbreak of plague. Crossing the Canal in despite of the regulations made by local officials was a harder problem than crossing the desert, until Lawrence rang up a friendly staff officer with courage enough to break the rules. After a night of comfort at Suez he left for Cairo, still in Arab dress, sun-baked,

and reduced by hardships to no more than seven stone in weight, an inexplicable figure to the Railway Police. A bare-footed, white-robed nondescript, contemptuous of soldiers' red-tape and soldiers' etiquette, he was irritated to see Admiral Wemyss on Ismailia platform, and to be unable to speak to him because the Admiral was held in conversation by an unknown general. Lawrence buttonholed another naval officer and learned that this was Allenby, the new Commander-in-Chief. The Navy was not to be balked by fear of any dignitaries, and without disturbing the Admiral's conversation, the staff officer arranged to send a ship with stores to Akaba.

A week in Egypt was enough for Lawrence to convince Allenby of the importance of Akaba, to redeem with gold the promissory notes which he and Nasir had issued to the Arabs, and to plan with Clayton a new campaign. In a single conversation he imposed himself on Allenby as he had done on Feisal. He explained his new strategy, and pleaded his cause before the silent general, in that persuasive voice 'always soft and low, yet charged with a high electric audacity', until at the end Allenby 'put up his chin and said, "Well, I will do for you what I can"'. It was enough. Feisal's army was to be brought up

from Wejh to Akaba with its stores, and its British advisers, and was to be reconstituted as an army under the command of Allenby. The war in the Hejaz was virtually over: Emir Abdulla and Emir Ali might confront the Turks in Medina, as independent leaders, without much affecting the Arab cause. Fakhri Pasha, the indomitable, might be trusted to hold his trenches, and might well be left there out of harm's way. There he sat besieged, living on his transport mules for another eighteen months while the Arab Revolt surged up into Syria, regardless of him. British and French officers, unjustly forgotten, harried him with railway raids, while Abdulla and Ali receded from the foreground of the picture.

On July 22nd Lawrence again landed at Jedda. Allenby had sent him back, fortified with a fund of two hundred thousand sovereigns, as liaison officer with Feisal, and had charged him with the special duty of persuading King Hussein to approve the new plan. It was perhaps on this occasion that Lawrence went to Mecca, as has been vehemently asserted and as vehemently denied by persons equally well-informed. If so, he then saw 'the Holy Place, which no other man since the days of Mohammed has seen without making public confession of the religion of

Islam'. At Mecca, or at Jedda, he talked Hussein over. The old King was more interested in making himself Caliph than in prosecuting the war. He was jealous of his son, Feisal, and willing to let him go campaigning far from home: it proved their loyalty to their allies.

During the six months when Lawrence had been leading the Arabs from Wejh to Akaba, there had been great changes in the general course of the War. Mr Lloyd George, who had become Prime Minister at the end of 1916, urged upon the generals the necessity of scoring some success in the East to counterbalance the failures on the Western Front. Though the battle of the Somme had not brought about a German defeat, he still hoped to reach an early decision by defeating Turkey; and rightly believed that any victory in the Holy Land would gratify his sentimental fellow-citizens. Throughout 1917 he steadily gave his support to the Palestine army, and would have reinforced it even more strongly but for the passive resistance of his military advisers who strove to keep the soldiers in France. It was difficult enough to find shipping for the great stores of material which were required in Egypt and Mesopotamia. By March, 1917, each of these campaigns had been set on a very different footing; Sir Stanley Maude was able to

advance up the Tigris, supported by an immense organisation of river transport; Sir Archibald Murray had laid a broad-gauge railway across the desert, and had brought Nile water by a twelve-inch pipe line to the Palestine frontier.

Behind Maude's army, which entered Baghdad on March 11th, 1917, the conquered territory was ably administered by political officers from India. While they took into their confidence the more enlightened of the Arab notables, they never treated the Arabs as independent allies; but as a subject race delivered from oppression and brought under good government. But the capture of a city with a quarter of a million inhabitants and a tradition reaching back to the Empire of Haroun-al-Raschid demanded a new policy, of which Sir Mark Sykes was the interpreter. He composed a florid and ridiculous proclamation in which 'the nobles, elders and representatives' of the people of Baghdad were invited 'to participate in the management of their civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain'; with the benevolent intention that they might 'unite with their kinsmen in the North, East, South, and West'. The elders of Baghdad took this invitation with a grain of salt, and showed little surprise when General Maude, who had neither consulted

them nor his own political officers, appointed as Military Governor of the city a soldier who spoke Turkish and no Arabic. Evidently the proclamation was to be taken as window-dressing; the outside world might think well of the shop-window; but it was not likely to impress those who knew the goods kept within.

Nevertheless the capture of Baghdad was a genuine triumph, and the first the British had gained in their war with Turkey. It was then General Murray's turn: he too was an orthodox soldier, strongly equipped and well supplied in all respects except with men. A few days after the fall of Baghdad he launched his first attack on the strong Turkish position at Gaza, a strange battle in which both sides thought themselves defeated. Murray made some progress, hesitated, failed to push home his assault, and at last sent back to England a cheerful despatch in which he claimed to have done pretty well; but the Turks were still in Gaza. The Government were now optimistic about the Eastern War, and sent him tanks and heavy guns with which to renew the attack. Murray was nothing if not a dogged fighter. He mounted a large-scale attack, supporting his infantry with preliminary bombardment, gas, and tanks; and was bloodily repulsed in the Second Battle of Gaza, which

lowered the Palestine campaign to the witless, heartless level of the Western Front: he could have done no worse in Flanders. In these two battles he had killed or taken 1700 Turks at a cost of 3000 permanently disabled British. Lawrence just after the Second Battle had set out on his desert raid from Wejh to Wadi Sirhan and to Akaba. He had killed or taken 1200 Turks at a cost of two Arabs killed. 'In other words', says Captain Liddell Hart, 'Murray had sacrificed roughly two men to "kill" one Turk, the same number that the Arabs had sacrificed to "kill" twelve hundred Turks.' Yes—if war were merely a matter of 'hecatists': but Lawrence never forgot that the Arab Revolt, without British help, would easily have been crushed; that, unless Murray had crossed the Sinai Desert, the Arabs could never have advanced to Akaba; that the Arabs, lucky as their spring campaign had been, were only the pawns of Britain's game. Yet so determined were the British to win the game, that they were ready to risk more than three thousand lives again: this Lawrence overlooked.

After Second Gaza, Murray was replaced in command by Sir Edmund Allenby, whose army had done well at the Battle of Arras, fought in a snowy April over bleak featureless plains. Allenby was as orthodox a professional soldier as Murray,



bred in the same military tradition, and was not reputed to be an imaginative man: his appearance and manner alike justified his nickname of 'the Bull'. Yet his career in France suggested that he was not likely to go on blindly butting at the gates of Gaza. On the Somme and at Arras he had shown two qualities rare in Western Front generals: he never shrank from cutting his losses by breaking off an unsuccessful engagement, and he always shouldered the responsibility when things went wrong. His greatness was of a moral not an intellectual order. Tactically he had no new secrets which had been hidden from Murray, and without Murray's preparations he could have done little. So far the campaign had been an engineer's war. 'Typically British,' wrote the official historian, 'resolute in the extreme, pursued with great material resources, and without limit as to cost. No difficulties called a halt, scarce even a pause', and when the objective was reached 'heavy blows were struck with mobile forces'.

Sir Edmund Allenby never belittled his predecessor's work in bridging the desert and providing him with a trained army of well-found men on the borders of Palestine. Allenby's task looked like Mesopotamia, over again. The British, repulsed from Gallipoli in 1915, and

from Baghdad in 1916, had been brought up short, in 1917, before Gaza, where they seemed likely to remain.

The Germans were alarmed, not by Allenby's arrival, but by Maude's victory on the Tigris, and organised their great counterstroke to push him back, allotting for this service a body of technical troops under Falkenhayn, the conqueror of Roumania. While Allenby was reorganising the army before Gaza, Falkenhayn was secretly reorganising, in far Silesia, a staff of German officers and a corps of German troops, who were to concentrate at Aleppo for the reconquest of Baghdad. This new secret army, under rigid German control, was known by the Turkish code-name of *Yilderim* ('Lightning'), and its constitution was not long kept secret from the Arab Bureau. Falkenhayn's first struggle was not against the British, but against the Turkish Government. When he learned that Allenby's plan was 'to give Jerusalem as a Christmas present' to the Allies, he saw the necessity of moving *Yilderim* southwards against Allenby, not eastwards against Maude; and in September took command of the Turkish front in Palestine. To students of military history, the winter campaign of 1917-18 conducted by two masters of mobile warfare, who manœuvred

veteran armies over plains, and mountains, and deserts, till Falkenhayn withdrew, out-fought and out-witted by Allenby, is of supreme interest. Here we must consider the use made by the British of the volatile Arab allies, now ranged on their right flank, at Akaba.

The deep depression running up from the Gulf of Akaba, the hottest region in the world, was to form a natural boundary between the Arab and British areas. The Arabs were down in the bottom of the rift, the Wadi Araba, or posted among the rocky hills to the east of it; the British were still far to the west across the desert.

Outposts were placed in the passes by which Turkish columns could advance from Ma'an or from the foot of the Dead Sea, the most remote post being in the narrow defile guarding the rock-hewn ruins of Petra. For more than a year Feisal's army was stationed about Akaba and in these hills.

A British ship in the Gulf served chiefly to give help in every technical trick which the resourceful bluejackets could compass; they taught Lawrence the use of an exploder, with which he could fire a mine connected to it by two hundred yards of wire. On shore Colonel Joyce and his

assistants struggled to provide the Arabs with arms and stores. Under Emir Feisal regiments of infantry were drilled by Jaafar, and a corps of mule-riders under Maulud, a Mesopotamian who had seen much service as a Turkish officer. There were Egyptian gunners under their own officers, and Algerian gunners under Pisani, a keen Frenchman. Hundreds of thousands of golden sovereigns were delivered to Feisal for paying to the tribesmen the subsidies which alone kept them under his flag. With these irregulars Lawrence was the only English link. As formerly he had ridden free on the outer flank of the British army, so now, when the Arab army was taking regular form, he was released to act as a free-lance with the unorganised Bedouin.

From August to October, 1917, there was continual activity up and down the valleys between the Arab army at Akaba, and the Turkish garrison at Ma'an, a campaign diversified by daily air-bombings. In October the Turks launched a general counter-attack, and were repulsed from Petra by Maulud's men, a signal victory for the Arabs, who had never before stood up to Turkish fire. Mr Lowell Thomas relates remarkable tales of Lawrence's part in this battle fought among the rose-red ruins, an ideal scene for romantic

exploits; but dull history gives the credit to Maulud, not recording even Lawrence's presence at the fight.

While Maulud held this outpost to the north, Lawrence was more often camped at Rumm, in an eastward valley, where the towering rock-pinnacles, and deep, spacious gorge soothed his spirits, and uplifted his heart. Here his restless intellect became contemplative, his introverted personality was, for once, not unhappy. A glimpse is allowed us into a deeper layer of his mind than his own frank account gives elsewhere, a region untouched by physical experience, beyond the control of conscious reasoning. The apparition of a blind visionary who delivered a gnomic saying to him at Rumm: 'The love is from God; and of God; and towards God', shook his faith in his too facile theory of the Semitic nature: he shrank 'in fear' from the revelation. Under the physical strain of his adventures, and the mental strain of the responsibilities with which his scrupulous conscience loaded him, Lawrence was keyed up to high nervous tension, ripe for a sudden conversion. If his will had been weaker, he might then have flung off his obligations, and luxuriated in mystical fervour, might have become the new

desert prophet that some of his admirers have supposed him to be. He withdrew into himself; closed his ears to the revelation, a freakish unreality for his materialistic Arab friends; and became again the British officer, coolly employing Arab auxiliaries in the Turkish war.

From Rumm, in August, Lawrence carried out his most celebrated railway raid, the subject of an incident described with graphic completeness in the *Seven Pillars*, a book which for all its wealth of detail often fails to provide a precise narrative. Among the British instructors at Akaba were two sergeants, Yells, a lean, brown, casual Australian, and Brooke, a fresh-faced, self-possessed English yeoman. Lawrence nicknamed them after the weapons in which they were skilled, the light machine gunner, 'Lewis', and the trench mortar man, 'Stokes'. The Australian 'Lewis' wanted to see some of the fun; the Englishman 'Stokes' 'supposed that if we did it, he could'. Lawrence was delighted with the two, keenly interested in their manly rivalry, their conduct with the Arabs, their different capabilities. They stood for him as the two classes of Englishmen abroad; the quick-witted 'Lewis', darker-skinned than the Arabs, and, like Lawrence himself, swiftly assimilating

himself to their type; the slower, solider 'Stokes', who became more English the farther he was from home, 'yet his stout example cut wider swathe'.

It was Lawrence's whim to ride harder than ever before with these two recruits to camel-riding, watching to see which of them first would utter a complaint. As they knew no Arabic they little guessed what loud complaints the Arabs uttered against Lawrence's harshness, but rode on in painful silence. Near Muddowara station, they found a culvert where the inner side of a curve was banked up, to make an ideal trap for those who should escape from a wrecked train. Lawrence laid his mine beneath the culvert and took post a few yards away; an Arab watched for his signal to fire the charge. 'Lewis' was to shoot down any Turks who came into the open, 'Stokes' to lob his heavy mortar-bombs among any who took refuge in the curve behind the bank. The Arabs were well placed to join in the shooting and to monopolise the looting. The plan worked to perfection when a two-engined train carrying troops, civilians, and invalids ran into the trap. 'Lewis' drove the Turks into cover, 'Stokes' slaughtered them there; and turned sick when he saw the results of his fire. While the Arabs, in frenzy, looted the train and the victims,

before dispersing with their prey into the desert, Lawrence demolished the other engine with gun-cotton, intervened to save civilians from Arab fury, and jammed up the door of a truck full of typhus patients, to keep out marauders. With difficulty the three Englishmen, left almost alone at the end, found camels enough to get their guns and gear away; even then Lawrence had to ride back with volunteers to pick up an Arab left wounded behind. That day he perfected his method of train-wrecking, and often repeated it. The fault of this raid, by his way of thinking, was that he had been in command himself; it was his fixed belief that the secret of managing the Arabs was 'never to give orders to anyone at all' but to work as adviser to an Arab leader, always 'strengthening his prestige at your expense', a method invented, says Macaulay, by Dupleix, two hundred years ago in India.

A few days after returning from the raid with 'Stokes' and 'Lweis', Lawrence was off on another raid with Pisani, the Frenchman, choosing his objective farther north 'for variety'. Again he bagged a troop-train passing over a culvert, but did not this time take his adventure in so gay a spirit. He was bitten by a scorpion on the way out, and wounded by a bullet in the fight.



There was in him a strain of asceticism that helped him to make light of bodily pains: he appeased his conscience by mortifying the flesh. Such inward revulsions against the work he was doing were far too subtle to be appreciated by the direct and downright Arabs, whose single-hearted desire for the bodily pleasures they so rarely enjoyed provoked his envy. They were fighting for loot and for liberty, but what was he fighting for? For them, or for Allenby or to gratify his own ambition? As his fame grew, so it became distasteful to him; the more he examined his own motives, the less he liked them. To curb the vanity in his nature he promised himself that he would 'shoot straighter, ride harder, eat and drink less' than the Arabs, and claim no reward. To justify his actions before his own conscience he promised himself that he would carry the Revolt into Syria, and would oblige England to set the whole Arab nation free, in spite of all other considerations. At Akaba his English colleagues shared neither his scruples nor his aspirations. Such accounts as are available describe Lawrence, in 1917, still as a cheerful boyish junior officer, justly promoted to be Major at twenty-nine, and remarkable for his exploits in native costume. His letters to friends showed little sign of his inner qualms.

‘ The last stunt was the hold-up of a train . . . my loot was a superfine red Baluch prayer-rug. I hope this sounds the fun it is . . . it’s the most amateurish, Buffalo-Billy sort of performance. . . . ’

By October, 1917, the stage was set for General Allenby’s first Palestine campaign, in which he regained the lost arts of mobility and surprise. He deluded the enemy into thinking that John Bull would renew his blind attacks on Gaza, while actually a swift stroke with cavalry was to be made at Beersheba thirty miles inland. The secret preparations for transferring troops from the sea-coast to the hills were masked by many ingenious tricks, and particularly by Colonel Meinertzhagen’s ruse. Unlike his predecessor, Allenby had placed his headquarters near the front and had reconnoitred his open flank with a strong force of cavalry. Hence the Turks were not surprised at the ease with which one day they ambushed a senior British staff officer out with a mounted patrol. This was Colonel Meinertzhagen, who fled from the fight, as though wounded, dropping, for the Turks to retrieve, a haversack full of secret papers about a third attack at Gaza. Falkenhayn made his plans accordingly. But behind this first game of

bluff there was a second, and a third. When the real attack on Beersheba was unmasked, the Turks were to be deceived again with the suggestion that the Arab armies were falling on their flank. Lawrence and Feisal dallied with the idea of making a genuine attack, until Allenby overruled Lawrence, and Lawrence persuaded Feisal that the time was not ripe for raising the tribes in Syria, until *Yilderim* should be defeated, and the Arab regular army better prepared. For the present what was wanted was, by two feints against them, to make the Turks think that Feisal was moving. Colonel Newcombe, with a band of Arabs, was to cut in behind Beersheba at Hebron; and Lawrence was to ride round four hundred miles through the desert to Deraa junction, where he hoped to cut off the Palestine army from supplies by destroying a bridge in the deep Yarmuk gorge.

As Lawrence interpreted this plan, he would now move a step higher up the ladder of tribes. He had mounted from Yenbo to Wejh, from Wejh to Akaba, and would now go up from Akaba to Azrak, a ruined castle at the head of the Wadi Sirhan. For technical assistance he would take with him an English engineer officer, for fighting power a section of Indian machine-gunners, and for a Sheikh to be in nominal com-

mand, young Sherif Ali Ibn el Hussein, a handsome, dashing savage, noted for his strength and swiftness of foot.

They rode out from the cool haunted valley of Rumm into the desert, accompanied as far as Auda's camp by George Lloyd, who delighted Lawrence with the rare pleasure of a scholar's conversation. Afterwards there was less amenity. The Indians, though stout fighters, were bad camel-masters; the tribes to be raised proved untrustworthy; and the party included a traitor, Abd-el-Kader, a crazy old Syrian chief, who soon deserted to the Turks. Luckily they mistrusted the reports he gave of Lawrence's movements. On a dark night their attempt on the Yarmuk bridge failed. An Indian gave the alarm by dropping his rifle, whereupon the Arabs threw their explosives into the ravine and fled, leaving Lawrence and Sherif Ali to make their escape through point-blank rifle fire. Unwilling to return empty-handed, these two sent away the Indians and the auxiliaries, and set themselves the familiar task of bagging a train, by way of compensation. In weather turning wet and cold, they watched the line for two days without food. After a first failure they had the luck of holding up the Corps Commander. It was Jemal himself on his way to the front with

four hundred men, who turned out briskly to fight the raiders. In the explosion Lawrence was hurt, and was five times hit by bullets before Sherif Ali and his men could rescue him, with a loss of several lives. Bloodshed and no loot made it a barren victory.

Meanwhile the Battle of Beersheba had begun. Meinertzhagen's ruse had concentrated Falkenhayn's attention on Gaza; Newcombe's raid on Hebron had drawn off what reserves were available at the other flank. There was already panic behind the Turkish lines at Beersheba when the unsuspected attack was launched on them. If the weather had been propitious, the Turks might have been driven out of Palestine that autumn, but the cavalry after their first success were stopped by the drought, which gave Falkenhayn time to reorganise his defences. He extricated his men skilfully from the position they could no longer hold and fell back into the hills of Judaea, quite confident that he would be able to make a stand. Newcombe, who had carried out his rôle with extraordinary skill and daring, was overwhelmed by the reserves he had deliberately attracted and was forced to surrender.

All through November Allenby's men pressed on. The decisive victory had not been won, but Falkenhayn, out-manceuvred at the beginning

of the battle, was out-fought at the end of it. Counter-attacks at Beersheba did not prevent the British from attacking at Gaza, and later concentrations to stop the advance along the coast permitted further advances in the hills. In December, Falkenhayn fell back behind Jerusalem, having lost 27,000 men in forty days. His final counter-attack on the 27th was a total failure.

Lawrence spent the greater part of November at Azrak bivouacking with Sherif Ali in the ruined castle which overlooked standing pools of water. Here in a desert outpost just beyond the fringes of the sown land Roman legionaries, Frankish Crusaders, and countless Arab warriors had camped before him. For Lawrence the historian, the place was haunted by the memories of old wars; for the Bedouin, it seemed more directly haunted with ghosts and demons. By night Ali and Lawrence lay talking in their roofless tower, by day they entertained emissaries from all the clans and peoples of the Syrian desert. There were many servile and politic townsmen whose insincerity set Lawrence's teeth on edge, and by contrast one famous outlaw, Tallal, the Sheikh of Tafas, a mighty foe of the Turks.

Neither the charm of Sherif Ali's company nor

the romantic place in which they camped outweighed with Lawrence his sense of failure and unworthiness. As before, his discontent tempted him to take risks in spying out the land, and in his Arab dress he wandered into the Turkish garrison town of Deraa, to study at leisure the lines of approach to the railway junction. For once, his luck failed, and he was arrested as a Circassian deserter. A fortnight earlier he had taken five bullet-wounds in action, and had thought little of them. Now he was to suffer pains many times greater and the greatest humiliation that man can inflict on man. After scorning the adulation of the Syrians, rejecting the praise of his own countrymen, he was bidden to serve the base lust of a Turkish officer, tortured and scourged when he resisted. 'That night', he wrote, 'the citadel of my integrity had been irrevocably lost.'

His duty had forced him to inflict, and his conscience to endure, much cruel violence, but until now he had never known the limits of his power, never lost his self-control, never called on his last reserves of strength. That which he secretly feared had happened: the flesh had betrayed its ultimate weakness. And yet, as he crept away, broken and forgotten by his tormentors, he did not omit to notice the road-plan of Deraa and the position of the railway bridge.

Somehow he deceived his Arab friends with some forged tale, but was unfit for further negotiation with the tribes. He parted from his true comrade, Sherif Ali, like David from Jonathan, and, spurring on his worn-out body to one more effort, rode away to Akaba.

Three weeks later he was summoned to Palestine. Allenby had reserved for him the one honour he appreciated, a place at the official entry to Jerusalem on December 11th, 1917. Borrowing here a cap and there a belt he was able, and for once was willing, to appear in the uniform of a British staff officer. It was for him, he said, 'the supreme moment of the war', a strange valuation, for it had no strategic importance either to the Arab campaign or to England's war, beyond the heartening effect on English *moral*. In what obscure way it heartened so lucid a thinker as Lawrence, of what more real triumph it was symbolic, is left to our imagination. Recognition of his service by Allenby was perhaps the one personal tribute acceptable to his tortured spirit; the rock-like Allenby, the only man on whom his pride would allow him to lean. His reliance on Allenby was justified, for Allenby had saved the Arabs by defeating *Tilderim*; and Allenby had publicly acclaimed his trust in Lawrence, ignoring the failure at Yarmuk.



## CHAPTER V

### TAFILA AND THE JORDAN RAIDS

ALLENBY's first plan for 1918 was to fight his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and to occupy the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea; Feisal's army, growing in size and efficiency, was to reach the Dead Sea at its southern shore, a fertile area from which the Turks drew supplies, thus drawing further away from King Hussein's control to co-operate more closely with Allenby. A special branch of his staff, the Hejaz Operations Staff—known for short as 'Hedgehog'—supervised the Arab campaign.

Its chief staff officer was Colonel Dawnay, its chief executive officer Colonel Joyce, who kept an unceasing pressure on the Turkish railway garrisons about Ma'an. The Arab force at Akaba had been reinforced by armoured cars which, when once they had laboured up the steep ravines of Edom and Moab, could race at sixty miles an hour across the dry mud-flats through which the railway ran. Lawrence recounts with gusto the keen pleasure he took in these raids when he accompanied Joyce as a passenger, all the more pleased at not being responsible for the

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slaughter and destruction. Joyce directed Feisal's main operations, which occupied the Arab regulars all the winter and spring; Lawrence, still a freebooter, was sent off after his old companions Nasir and Auda to raise the tribes and cut off the Turkish posts at the foot of the Dead Sea.

His renown and standing in the desert demanded that like any other sheikh he should lead his own band of followers. From time to time the Turks laid a price on the head of some unusually troublesome Bedouin. When Sherif Ali and Lawrence had wrecked Jemal's train, he paid them the compliment of offering for each of them £20,000 alive or £10,000 dead, a top price, which justified Lawrence in enlisting a personal escort. All through life he had a liking for a lively rogue, and indulged his fancy by collecting a gang of gaudy cut-throats selected from the boldest outlaws in the desert. Of their full number, ninety, he selected thirty or forty for each expedition, allowing the others to take home their loot and rest their camels. Their service was voluntary, but while in the field their discipline was ferocious. He paid them six pounds a month, provided them with the best camels in Arabia, armed them with a Lewis gun between two men, and led them where loot was plentiful. Sixty of

them died in his service. The gang (this seems the appropriate word) took its origin from the handful of personal retainers who had followed him to Azrak, three or four men, and two boys, Farraj and Daud, as faithful to Lawrence as fond of one another. But Daud died of cold in the winter campaign, and Farraj, reckless through misery, took crazy risks under fire. When he was wounded, Lawrence killed him to save him from falling alive into Turkish hands. We do not read that he gave his affection to any others of his followers, or to any other Arab after his parting from Sherif Ali.

The Arab advance began in the depth of a bitter mountain winter against which there was no protection. All preparations had been for a campaign in tropical heat, but more Arabs died of cold than of Turkish bullets. Nasir's men raided another railway station, halted for two days in the snow, then pushed on into the plain, to Tafilah, a little town, which they summoned to surrender. The Turkish garrison would have resisted, had not Auda suddenly shown himself on the ridge overlooking the town, crying, 'Dogs, do you not know Auda?' At that terrible name they surrendered. If it was terrible to the Turks, it spelt trouble for the Arabs, for the old outlaw was insatiably greedy and quarrelsome

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and jealous. Arab regulars under Jaafar were hurried up to hold the captured position, and with them Lawrence as adviser to Emir Zeid, Feisal's young brother who was in nominal command. They soothed the ruffled feelings of Auda with gold, and sent him away. Then this Bedouin raid changed suddenly into a regular campaign.

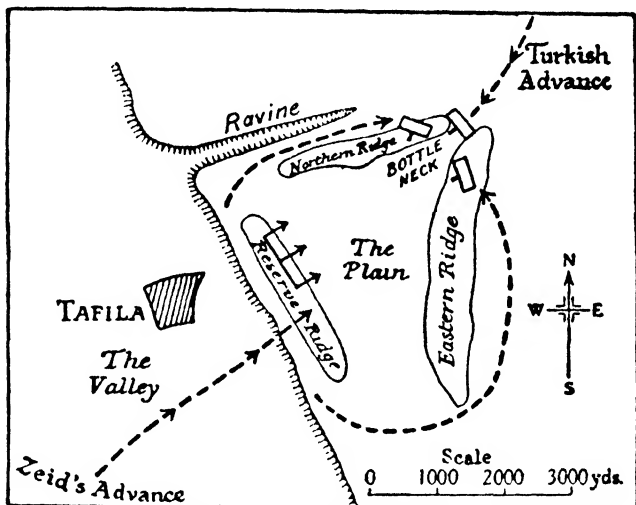
A Turkish general with horse, foot, and guns came up against them in Tafila, obliging Lawrence, against his principles, to fight his one orthodox battle, a little masterpiece. Young Zeid and his general, Jaafar, retired from the village of Tafila to hold the heights to southward, a policy with which Lawrence disagreed, as his interest was to protect and encourage the villagers. He spent the night of January 24th wandering unnoticed among the terrified inhabitants, and on the morning of the 25th persuaded some of them to join his own followers in harrying the Turkish advance-guard, which was still some miles away. Then, going forward, he found a position, which seemed easily defensible, east of the town. Tafila lies at the foot of a steep slope, above which stands a plateau two miles long from north to south, a flat grassy plain, triangular in shape, and commanded on each side by a low rocky ridge. The road along which the Turks were marching debouched into the

plain through a bottle neck at the north-east corner of the triangle. Here they could be stopped by fire from the opposite side, which he called the Reserve Ridge. His first concern was to find some skulkers from the battle and to place them, not without the use of scarifying language, along the Reserve Ridge as a skeleton force on which to build up his firing line. Next he walked forward to the Bottle Neck and found a motley group of Arabs, his own men among them, clinging to the Northern Ridge in a perturbed state. After a long and confused skirmish they had been driven back to this position, and were in danger of being outflanked, as the Turks were round their right flank on the Eastern Ridge. Some of Lawrence's body-guard were greatly distressed at being beaten in their first fight, until he gaily assured them that the battle had hardly begun. Neatly they were sent back to the Reserve Ridge, group by group, first the dismounted villagers, then Lawrence himself walking barefooted over the frozen ground and counting his steps to check the range, last his mounted body-guard, who hung on ten minutes to cover the retirement.

Now all were safely back behind a flinty bank on the Reserve Ridge from where they could see the Turks crowding through the Bottle Neck to-

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wards the position Lawrence had just abandoned. Meanwhile Zeid's men were hurrying up to take their place in the firing line. At three in the afternoon the Arabs were all in position under



The Battle of Tafila, January 25th, 1918.

cover; the Turks were deploying to right and left a mile away before their eyes, within machine-gun range. It was an easy task to delay their movements and fix their attention by a desultory frontal fire while the next move was prepared. Cold though it was, Lawrence found time to take an hour's sleep, stretched behind the bank,

over which skimmed and ricocheted the bullets from twenty Turkish machine-guns. 'I have been forty years a soldier', said the doomed Turkish commander, 'but never have I seen rebels fight like this.'

So intent were the Turks upon the Arabs whom they had seen running and riding back to the Reserve Ridge that they forgot their own flanks. Lawrence had sent a band of horsemen away to the right to ride round behind the Eastern Ridge and fall upon the Turkish left. When this was done, he sent the villagers, who knew the ground, to creep round the other flank along the slopes of a precipitous ravine behind the Northern Ridge. This was the decisive stroke. The villagers, unobserved, got near enough to silence the massed Turkish machine-guns by a sudden volley. Away to the right, the horsemen seized the moment to charge home. Both Turkish flanks were crumpled, all their guns were taken. As they surged back into the Bottle Neck, leaving their commander dead, the Arabs advanced from the Reserve Ridge to complete the victory. A handful of Turks, without arms or transport, were all that escaped, even though the Arabs were too cold and weary to pursue them far.

This, alone of Lawrence's battles, has been

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thought worthy of a full description in the Official History. From the professional soldier's point of view it was an almost faultless performance, an encounter battle in which one combatant lured the other into an untenable position with both flanks exposed; it was a model of economy, three Turkish battalions, a squadron of cavalry, and a section of howitzers were destroyed at a cost of fifty or sixty Arab casualties; but the performance did not please the author, who held himself responsible for the blood of every man slain. He despised the Turks for walking into the trap, and himself for slaughtering them. They had achieved nothing, hardly could have achieved anything even if they had been clever enough to disperse the Arabs; but he had not done much. He would have preferred to keep their garrisons in being, to herd them into some garrison where they would be a perpetual drain on the resources of their army. As a strategist and as a humane man he would rather they were alive than dead; and there was no excuse for the death of his own Arabs. By letting the Turks fight he had sunk to their level: tip-and-run was his game, not hammer-and-tongs. Nevertheless there was some satisfaction to the conscious artist in a work of art well done. The amateur strategist had proved that he could fight 'by the Book of Arithmetic'.



With his tongue in his cheek he composed for head-quarters in Palestine the only record that exists of the Battle of Tafila, justifying each step by reference to Clausewitz or the practice of Napoleon's marshals, and explaining why he neglected the precepts of General Foch. Head-quarters riposted by awarding him the Distinguished Service Order. The award was gazetted, but the recipient refused to wear the medal; he said that there would be more 'bright breasts' in the army if every soldier, without witnesses, could write his own despatch.

This was not the end of the joke; his victory at Tafila enabled Lawrence, three days later, to make a raid on the southern shore of the Dead Sea. His camel-men fell upon a seaside village, and sank a flotilla of boats used by the Turks to carry supplies, a bold and useful work of destruction, which pleased him more than the battle. For this maritime exploit he suggested ironically that he should be given the naval D.S.O., a decoration with a ribbon of a different colour.

It would be hard to keep the tribes among the snow-covered mountains of Moab at mid-winter without copious gifts of money, for which Lawrence returned to Akaba, after a few days of misery cooped up among his verminous, quarrel-

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some followers at Tafila. Camels are bad beasts on icy roads and snow-slopes, and Arabs not much better adapted. As in the summer drought, so in the cold winter, Lawrence forced himself to outdo his five companions in endurance. Barefooted they led their beasts down the frozen gorges; wrapped only in their cloaks they sheltered against the blizzards. With brutal determination he drove beasts and men to the shivering outposts of Feisal's army, and rested there three days with Colonel Joyce. To return with thirty thousand pounds in gold was heavier toil. He outstripped and abandoned his companions, taking from them all the money he could carry, a hundredweight of gold, on the best camel from his stud, and pressed on alone through the snow; but not to a happy journey's ending. Young Zeid, not yet man enough to outwit the Bedouin in avarice, had spent all his cash and all his credit on the tribesmen. The treasure which Lawrence had brought through such misery to pay for the spring campaign was dissipated in unearned subsidies to unreliable allies, and had been brought in vain. Lawrence's will was at breaking-point. Though he had lavished huge sums on the Bedouin, he had been scrupulous never to employ the 'Horsemen of Saint George' without some return. The gold

dispersed was not spent in bribes, nor in complimentary gifts, but in fixed subsidies for services rendered, in payments to tribes according to their numbers and their days spent on campaign: money spent generously, but spent well. Zeid's inexperience was Lawrence's care; and the waste of many thousand pounds was a stain on Lawrence's honour. The long campaign, many wounds, torture at Deraa, bloodshed at Tafilah, physical exhaustion, mental revulsion, the biting cold, the keener disgrace, were overwhelming. He handed over his authority to Joyce, and, after leaving instructions for disbanding his body-guard, made his way to Allenby's head-quarters to resign his post.

Down from the wintry hills into the deep valley where warmth and fertility lingered, up again to Beersheba, was a ride of eighty miles, done in a night and a morning. Already Lawrence's resilience was at work. These lonely desert marches which would have broken most men's physique seemed always to restore his *moral*, so that he was receptive of encouragement from his old patron Hogarth, whom he happened to meet on his arrival. Having heard his tale and his war-weariness, Hogarth said nothing of his proposed resignation, but offered him new toils and new responsibilities.

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Blind to the coming storm which was to break upon the Army in France a few weeks later, Lloyd George's Cabinet had decided to make the principal effort for the year in Palestine, and had sent General Smuts to concert plans with Allenby for ending the Turkish War at a blow; it was to be an English *Yilderim*. In this scheme the Arab part, for which Lawrence's advice was required, would be to cover Allenby's right flank, now resting on the Jordan Valley. Seventeen thousand men, perhaps a third of the Turks on this front, were still immobilised in Medina or in Ma'an or in the block-houses along the railway; the time had come to cut them off finally from their base. The nearest station to Allenby's front on the Jordan was Amman, which held another large garrison. While the Arabs dealt with Ma'an, Allenby's men were to cross the Jordan to Es Salt and to send out a cavalry raid which would destroy irreparably the Amman tunnel and the line where Lawrence had been raiding with Auda, a year previously. For the Amman Raid, the key to the campaign, the fateful date, March 21st, 1918, was fixed.

Lawrence's part was to ride round behind the Dead Sea and, at the moment when Amman had fallen, to raise the neighbouring tribes, in whose country Feisal's army might make a new base.

Thus the Arab Revolt would mount another rung. Again Allenby's trust restored Lawrence's confidence; again Allenby's gifts of stores and camels and gold sent him back to Akaba, equipped for the task, though still his conscience pricked him. His duty to Allenby now obliged him to join in organising this methodical and probably bloody concentration, while his own conception of the Arab Revolt was to disperse the Arab effort still wider, and before the year was out to adventure as far as Damascus.

All that came of Lawrence's attempt to resign was the appointment of an understudy. He had been asked to name his successor and could only think of Major Young or Gertrude Bell. Young was chosen, since Gertrude Bell, though she was 'Uncrowned Queen of Mesopotamia' as much as Lawrence was 'Uncrowned King of Arabia', could hardly be expected to ride out wrecking trains. For the rest of the war a writer on Lawrence is in an easier position. Until the arrival of Young, the story told in the *Seven Pillars* can only be amplified or checked by reference to official records, which are discreet rather than candid, or to scraps gleaned casually from writers on other subjects. Young's book, *The Independent Arab*, gives the reverse side of Lawrence's adventures, and is also the reflexion

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of a strong and shrewd personality. The clash between the two men is of peculiar interest, Lawrence the uprooted wanderer identifying himself like Sergeant 'Lewis' with the Arabs, Young, like Sergeant 'Stokes', growing more English the farther he was from home. Each pays glowing tributes to the other's personality, and is exasperated by the other's obstinacy; Young striving to do three men's work with exact forethought and thoroughness, Lawrence slipping away on mysterious casual errands almost intuitively planned; Young furious against incompetence, and taking refuge in the Old Soldier's habit of grouching, while Lawrence took refuge in realms of fancy, retiring at the end of an argument to read the *Morte d'Arthur* in a corner of the mess-tent with an impish smile on his face. Lawrence still retained, as did many a Kitchener's Army officer, a prejudice against regular soldiers. Again and again in the *Seven Pillars* he checks himself in the middle of some gibe against them, to remember and record the admiration and gratitude he felt for Allenby, Dawnay, Joyce, Young and the others, but he never got beneath their skins. They were a type that Lawrence could never understand; he found himself more at home with Auda, the wild man of the desert. Lawrence's bond with

Emir Feisal was strengthened by a common liking for the undisciplined Bedouin; Feisal was not always happy with the regulars. But Young's comment is interesting, for he, too, fell under Feisal's spell: ' he reminded me of some beautiful thoroughbred quivering at the starting gate '.

Feisal, Dawnay, Lawrence, and Young discussed the spring campaign crowded in Feisal's bell-tent while the spring rain poured outside, Lawrence interpreting for Dawnay while Feisal smoked cigarette after cigarette and threw the butt-ends on the muddy floor. The first concern was Tafilah; for the Turks, confronted there to their surprise with a tangible foe, had organised a larger counter-attack, and had forced Emir Zeid to retire, soon after Lawrence had left him. It was not so great a danger as it seemed, for the coming battles at Amman and Ma'an would divert the Turks to more vital places. It was agreed to divide the army into two columns, north and south of Ma'an, which should each destroy several stations, thus stimulating the beleaguered garrison to come out and fight in the open. Lawrence rode off into the country east of the Dead Sea with a train of camels loaded with supplies for the tribesmen, and reached his rendezvous on April 3rd. Allenby's men, held up for two days by the flooded Jordan, had made

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a bad start, which gave the Turks time to bring up reinforcements. Es Salt had been taken, but Amman had stoutly resisted, and as the raiders were not in strength sufficient for a formal attack they had rightly decided, on April 1st, to retire. That was bad news enough; but, worse, they had failed to destroy the tunnel, and, worse still, they gave up Es Salt, their bridge-head east of Jordan, and came right back to the starting-point. Lawrence's informer told him, when he reached the neighbourhood, that the British were being chased right out of Palestine, and that Jemal Pasha was in Amman hanging those Arabs who had welcomed them. He knew his countrymen too well to credit the former story, and the Turks too well to doubt the latter: this would do endless harm to Emir Feisal's cause among the tribes thereabouts. Yet it would be a pity not to glean some information: he ventured into Amman disguised as a gypsy woman, vowing when his costume brought him the undesirable attentions of soldiers walking-out, that in future it would be safer to reconnoitre brazenly in British uniform, a bluff so shameless as to be safe.

Since nothing was to be done at Amman, he rode south to see what was happening at Ma'an, but not to direct operations. Dawnay, in person, exercised what control was possible over the



Arab columns. Like the regulars elsewhere, the Arab regulars wanted a concentration and a bold attack, all the more after the success with which a column under Jaafar destroyed a station north of Ma'an, and a column under Nuri Said a station to the south. Maulud, the defender of Petra, rashly launched an attack at Ma'an itself, but was repulsed and wounded. Yet those operations showed how much the Arabs had advanced in soldiering; the regulars firmly faced the Turkish fire, though the Bedouin, even Auda's men, were still useless. Ma'an could not be taken except by an army with far greater resources; but north and south of it for miles the line was destroyed, and lay in ruin for many years. Dawnay led a column southward to a carefully planned attack on Tel-es-Shahm station, using regulars and irregulars, camel-men and armoured cars together; and having at his elbow Lawrence as spectator, interpreter, and ironical critic. All was so precisely planned to a timetable that Lawrence blamed the Turks for surrendering too soon: it was not playing fair. So rich was the loot at Tel-es-Shahm that the Arab levies disintegrated to carry it home, before the last objective, Muddowara station, was reached. It would be hard to get them into the field again.

Young was then left to spread destruction

## TAFILA AND THE JORDAN RAIDS

northward while Lawrence again went to Palestine for instructions. At head-quarters he was met by the cheerful news: 'We're in Es Salt again.' While he was away, an airy optimist named Mirzuk had concocted a plan for renewing the Amman raid with help from the *Beni Sakr* tribe, who were to stop the roads by which Turkish reserves could come; and Allenby's staff had believed his assurance. Lawrence knew at once that no Bedouin would take such a risk so soon after the first failure, that many of the *Beni Sakr* were working with Young near Ma'an, and that Mirzuk had no authority over the others. The staff had blundered by neglecting to use their Arab advisers. Indeed the Australians and New Zealanders were in Es Salt again, but not for long. No Arabs moved to help them. So vigorous and swift were the Turkish counter-attacks that the whole raiding force was in danger of being cut off. Lawrence was even warned to be ready to fly to Es Salt as guide to the cavalry, if as a desperate measure they should decide to cut their way through the Turks and to escape by riding round the far side of the Dead Sea. But Allenby was always bold enough to cut his losses; just in time he admitted defeat, ordering a general retirement, which was carried out with heavy losses.

After two thwarted attempts to cross the Jordan, Allenby's prestige was much lowered. There was no talk now of ending the Turkish War at a blow; the problem was to hold on in Judaea, while most of the British infantry were withdrawn to withstand the German attacks in France. There, and in the East, the German cause revived for the last time; in Palestine, under a new leader. Not all the skill and science of von Falkenhayn had been able to save him from defeat, largely because his German staff officers had demanded of the Turks a standard of efficiency too high for Asiatics: Turkish *Yilderim* had been a failure. All this was changed when Liman von Sanders succeeded Falkenhayn in command. Liman had been several years in Turkey, and had commanded at the Dardanelles, where Turkish soldiers had shown their famed stubbornness in defence. To get the confidence of his men he put back Turkish Generals in the higher commands, and to get the best out of them he planned a rigid defensive campaign, a plan which failed because he had neither men nor materials enough to cover his front. He struggled with insuperable difficulties, political intrigues and gross corruption, a hostile civil population, declining resources, dwindling numbers. Regiments shrank to the size of battalions, battalions

## TAFILA AND THE JORDAN RAIDS

to companies. In the Arab units the rolls showed more deserters than serving soldiers; but the Turkish units, and the few Germans, fought undaunted. Their conduct at Es Salt was as soldierly as it had been three years earlier.

The news from Europe also affected the political relations of English, Arabs and Turks. Feisal, who had many liaisons with compatriots in Turkish service, entered into secret negotiations for a separate peace with Turkey. This was well known at the Arab Bureau, as was a secret negotiation begun in Switzerland between the British and another Turkish group. Neither intrigue came to anything, or was expected to come to much. No one understood the ins and outs of these plots better than Lawrence, who from February to June, 1918, was more concerned with diplomacy than with war. Six times he left the Arab army to visit Allenby's headquarters, usually by aeroplane; nine times he went to Egypt. Many days he spent on board ship coasting down the Gulf of Suez and up the Gulf of Akaba, or right down the Red Sea to Jedda when it was necessary to bribe or cajole old King Hussein.

When Lawrence was in Palestine at the time of the Second Jordan Raid, he overheard at Allenby's table the arrangements for disbanding

a Camel Corps, as part of the reorganisation, and hastily begged for the two thousand unwanted camels. This munificent gift from Allenby made possible a fresh series of projects for advancing into Syria, and presented some new problems in creating an army. While Young settled at Akaba in charge of transport, and performed miracles, Lawrence and Nasir went up-country spreading the area of ruin, with old Auda, and two British officers in armoured cars. Still Turkish posts were captured by camel charges, but demolition was done more widely by Rolls-Royce; and enemy resistance took the form of bombing from the air. Lawrence tells little of this expedition, and nothing of the first week in June except that he went through the *Beni Sakr* country. Since his book here contains a deliberately deceptive passage, it may be assumed that this was secret service indeed.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ADVANCE TO DAMASCUS

ON June 18th, Lawrence was again in Palestine, urging Allenby to permit a flank march by the Arabs towards Damascus. The proposal came late; three days earlier Allenby had made up his mind that his army, now reinforced from Mesopotamia, would be strong enough in September to carry out the plan abandoned in April. Again the Arab campaign was to be subordinated to Allenby's designs, a change of emphasis which made the prospect less agreeable to Lawrence. His plan and Feisal's, to carry the Revolt by its own impetus to Damascus, might end, now that Allenby's larger plan swallowed it up, in a mere change of masters for the Northern Tribes; Allenby might hold Damascus, or worse, he might hand it over to the French. Somewhat half-heartedly Lawrence went down to Jedda for one of his absurd arguments by telephone with Hussein the Irascible, who rang off before anything was settled. Down in the Holy Province, where there was no progress, no enthusiasm, and little loot, the Revolt was becoming a bore. Major Davenport had difficulty in persuading the Arabs to keep the railway cut; the Emirs Ali

and Abdulla took their campaigning very easily; King Hussein, puffed out with new-found dignity and still dreaming of the Caliphate (to be Pope, one might say, as well as Emperor), was jealous of his younger sons' successes. In the background loomed the threat of another war with Ibn Saud. From Mesopotamia Mr Philby crossed the desert to his camp at Riyadh and on to Jedda by ways no white man had used before, in an attempt to reconcile Hussein and Ibn Saud, but in vain. The judicious Ibn Saud remained the firm friend of the British, who paid him a small subsidy, but he was content to bide his time until he could settle his account with the Sherifs of Mecca.

Lawrence was away from the Arab fighting front for over a month, during which there was a noticeable falling off in Arab achievement, setbacks in the fighting about Ma'an, and no great Bedouin raids, until Allenby took the bold step of sending a camel corps of three hundred Englishmen under Major Buxton to stiffen them. Until then there had been in Arabia but a handful of English officers, of whom few went far inland, and those few in Arab dress. It was another matter to send a regiment of Tommies into the desert among the wild Bedouin, to be guided by Lawrence where no other white soldier but he had been since the Crusades. They

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were to cross the desert from Suez to Akaba, to march up through the valley of Rumm against Muddowara station, then to vanish into the desert, and to drop down on Amman from the east, a ride which had been a rash adventure to Lawrence and Sherif Ali the previous year.

Lawrence joined the camel corps at Rumm, the memory-haunted valley, and was smitten with home-sickness, mixed with a little jealousy, at sight of 'these healthy-looking fellows, like stiff-bodied schoolboys in their shirt-sleeves and shorts' wandering about the cliffs which had been his private resort, among the lean, lithe Bedouin, wide-eyed with astonishment that there were so many Englishmen in the world. Never had Lawrence felt so acutely his nondescript position, outcast from both worlds, a lonely stranger in either army, and yet the link that held them together. On the one hand he was 'El Aurans', the desert raider, the man known from Damascus to the Holy Province, like whom there was no other, whose brick-red beardless face and keen blue eyes, whose Meccan robes of white silk, whose skill and hardihood in desert marches, all were matchless; whose she-camel, Ghazala, whose gold-mounted rifle were legendary; who was in all men's councils, knew all secrets and scandals; and yet was a foreigner



without home or kin among the Arabs, was not even of their faith—a solitary, unique like the Arabian Phoenix. This was the figure which an American journalist was to reveal to the Western world; but what an unreal figure, and how inconsistent with the character of the whimsical laughing youngster whom old Auda called the ‘World’s Imp’; or with the home-sick Englishman envying the careless subordination of the English soldiers he so rarely saw.

On the other hand, the staff in Palestine exchanged despatches with another figure, Lieutenant-Colonel T. E. Lawrence, C.B., D.S.O. This person was a mere fiction, who neither used his rank nor wore his medals, and can hardly be said to have had any real existence. From time to time he was promoted, but it made no difference to his activities, or to his standing with the Arab levies, or with Allenby, whom he approached directly, regardless of ceremony. The decorations he had once coveted became so distasteful that he derided them, refused to accept several, and at last renounced them all. In the beginning he had been one of two British officers sent to Feisal’s help; in the end he was one of a little army including several officers senior to him; but his true position, depending on his own prestige, was unaffected.

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Among the Bedouin there was no chain of command, and every Arab might be another Lawrence if he could. Indeed they were anxious to emulate his exploits, but even more uncertain about his true character than Lawrence himself. 'Send us a Lurens', wrote one of them to Feisal, 'and we will blow up trains with it.'

He was now approaching his thirtieth birthday and remembered (looking back over the immense gulf which for all his contemporaries separated 1914 from 1918) that he had promised himself four years ago to win a knighthood and a general's rank by that date—barren honours, despised now that they were within his grasp. He got no satisfaction from the sense of power, nor from the remembrance of brave deeds done, nor from the advancement he might claim. He despised himself for sometimes succumbing to a common desire for these things; he hated the two parts he was obliged to play; and when he stripped off the two disguises to examine the real self beneath them, he hated that too, but he kept it private.

Duty was a commonplace, incoherent motive; ambition, a contemptible motive; love of liberty, a delusion; patriotism, difficult when 'those who loved England most, often liked Englishmen least'; honour, easier to die for than to live

for: better to die than to lead others into the slough of treachery and cruelty and final disillusion.

Yet Lawrence was never greater than when he assembled the English soldiers round their camp fire beneath the towering cliffs, and spoke to them of their task. They were going, he said, where white men had never been seen, among suspicious, half-friendly tribes who would be a greater danger to them than the Turks. He appealed to them to use their knowledge of the world not in asserting superiority over the Arab, but in turning the other cheek if the Arabs insulted them. He warned them that the least miscarriage in their plans, or weakness in their exertions, would mean death by heat and thirst in the desert, and inspired them with his own resolution.

Next morning he rode out with them a stage on their journey in the blazing heat, and when his body-guard jeered at the soldiers whose Soudanese camels could not keep pace with Arabian beasts, Lawrence told them that from the three hundred Englishmen he could pick ' forty fellows who would out-ride, out-fight, and out-suffer any forty men in Feisal's army '. After Lawrence and Major Stirling had reconnoitred Muddowara station in armoured cars, Buxton's

men captured it at a cost of four men killed and ten wounded.

While they pursued their march through the desert to the Wadi Sirhan he flew to join Emir Feisal at the camp of Nuri Shaalan. The time had come to raise the great *Rualla* tribe in revolt. When his aeroplane hardly cleared the rocky ridges he found himself wishing that he might crash to death and be spared this duty, so much more he hated the intrigue after his cheerful comradeship with Buxton's men. Distasteful as it was, this last preaching of the Revolt was the most successful. For the moment, even in spite of the two Amman defeats, the tribes had been persuaded to rely on the British, and were heartened, not alarmed by the appearance of the Camel Corps. Nuri Shaalan, very old and embittered, was not easy to convert. He shamed Lawrence by producing copies of the Sykes-Picot Treaty and of the British pledges to the Arabs, to which Lawrence could give no reply but a bitter jest. Where promises were contradictory Nuri Shaalan should believe the latest in date. Not this, but Feisal's intense sincerity at last won him over. Azrak, the desert gateway into Syria, could now become the head-quarters of the Arab armies—if Major Young could transport them to Azrak from Akaba.

When Buxton's Camel Corps slipped down on Amman from the desert side they found by ill-luck a superior Turkish column there. They therefore cut the railway line and rode away; but their expedition was far from being a failure. Rumours of their coming spread through the desert until they reached the ears of Liman von Sanders, persuading him that the next British attack would again be in the Jordan Valley.

The plan of the Battle of Megiddo was now fully prepared. A feint in the Jordan Valley would be followed by the real attack near the coast, a reversal of the ruse employed at Beersheba. The coastal attack should develop into a great advance by cavalry, who would ride round behind the Turkish Armies, seizing their headquarters at Nazareth, and pinning them against the Jordan Valley. If this were to be successful—and it involved risks—a series of deceptions, which would make Meinertzhagen's Ruse at Beersheba look primitive, must be practised on the Turks. Then, the Turks had been told that the English attack was to come on the left at Gaza, whereas it actually came on the right at Beersheba. The new General, Liman von Sanders, was not such a blockhead as to think that the English would play the same game again. He expected a double bluff; and the more that signs

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appeared of a renewed attack on Amman across the Jordan Valley, the more he was convinced that this time the attack really would come that way. Further, by all the rules of orthodox strategy, the Jordan Valley was the key to the position. All the supplies of the Turkish Army were dependent on the railway junction at Deraa, and Deraa was protected by the garrison of Amman. Clearly these were the points towards which a hostile concentration ought to be pointed; and Allenby's two raids across Jordan, together with Buxton's movements, proved that Allenby was concentrating on that section of line.

To strengthen that impression Allenby stationed cavalry all the summer below sea-level in the Jordan Valley, where no white men had ever before spent a hot season. He built standing camps and head-quarter offices behind that front; he concentrated artillery fire and air-raids against it, while secretly by night great masses of cavalry were moved round to hide in the olive groves of Ramleh near the sea-coast. Two or three days before the assault an Indian deserter gave the secret away, but Liman von Sanders refused to believe him. Obviously this was a new variant of Meinertzhagen's Ruse; the deserter was 'planted' on him, he thought, and he refused to believe the true story.

Lawrence had been the intermediary who arranged with Allenby the part to be played by the Arabs, the isolation of Deraa, which would be an actual contribution to the battle, and the final act in the comedy of deception. If, three days before the real assault took place near the coast, the Arabs would attack Deraa, Liman would be obliged to hold his reserves near enough to protect it. But the unpunctual Arabs must work to a time-table. 'Three men and a boy with pistols', said Allenby, 'before Deraa on September 16th' would be better than thousands a day or two later. Their duty was not so much to seize the town as to cut the railway north, south, and east of it, and so to cut the communications of all three Turkish Armies. Lawrence and Joyce prepared the plan; Lawrence and Feisal called out the tribes; but it was Young who put the Arab Army in motion. Young had to despatch the two thousand camels with drivers terrified of the desert into distant oases where the Bedouin were likely to plunder them, to buy forage hundreds of miles away in territory still nominally under Turkish rule, to send forward petrol for the armoured cars, and food for the motley army; and to urge every plan into execution by his own driving force. His natural caution was always at odds with Lawrence's

audacity. He always protested that what Lawrence demanded could not be done, but in the end it always was done well. And on September 16th twelve hundred Arab regulars and large numbers of Bedouin were in front of Deraa.

Lawrence's masterful self-confidence and skill in persuasion had other difficulties to overcome. Allenby had recognised the services of the Arabs by obtaining an award of the C.M.G. for their commander Jaafar (and had pleased him best by parading, as escort at the investiture, that squadron of Dorset Yeomen who had ridden over him two years ago in the Senussi Desert), and had stirred King Hussein to jealous wrath. He issued at Mecca a proclamation denying that Jaafar was commander-in-chief, whereupon all the Arab officers and Emir Feisal himself resigned their commands. Soon the camp was in uproar and mutiny, which Lawrence alone could quell, negotiating in turn with each of the offended chiefs, with Feisal, with Allenby, and by telegraph with King Hussein. To bring about his end he did not scruple to amend the wording of messages from the King, finding one less insolent than the others which he could forge into the shape of a lame apology. By this Bismarckian device and by much flattery, he soothed ruffled feelings.



On August 30th the march of the Arab Northern Army to Azrak began. In spite of Young's protests, stores and rations were cut down by half. If the expedition were to last more than a few days the troops must live on the country. There was no margin of supplies reserved against the chance of defeat; and this was a much greater affair than any of Lawrence's earlier raids, much greater than Buxton's march. There were four hundred and fifty mounted Arab regulars in the first column with twenty machine-guns, a French Algerian battery of guns, Egyptian camel-men under Peake, a section of Gurkha machine-gunners, two British armoured cars with five tenders, and two aeroplanes. Another convoy of eight hundred Arab regulars mounted on camels followed next day.

Lawrence, with Lord Winterton or Major Stirling (each of whom has written an admirable account of his experiences), cruised about the desert between the marching columns in a Rolls-Royce car, the 'Blue Mist'; Feisal, with Nuri Shaalan, lord of the lands through which they moved, drove in a green Vauxhall, the gift of Allenby. All the surviving protagonists of the campaign, save Dawnay who was ill, were present: Auda and Tallal the irregulars, Nasir and Nuri Said with detachments of Feisal's

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army, Pisani, the embodiment of Gallic fire, Peake and Hornby the indefatigable dynamiters, Young grappling with problems of supply and transport, Joyce taking command at the critical point, and Lawrence keyed up to his highest pitch, continually demanding what seemed impossible until he led the way to do it.

Two days before Allenby's appointed date, September 16th, they moved to Umtaiye, a water-hole five miles from the railway; and made their plans for demolishing the line north, south, and east of Deraa. While they struck first at the northern branch, Lawrence himself ran down the railway in a car crammed with gun-cotton to cut the southern branch by destroying a great bridge. Next day he rejoined the Arabs in the midst of a furious fight for Tell Arar station. The fight was won, but the work of demolishing the northern branch was interrupted by an attack from eight Turkish aeroplanes, against which a single English airman, a youngster named Junor, fought alone. Lawrence was slightly wounded, 'curiously', he says, the first time he had been hit from the air. Next he set out with Young, in a Ford tender, to join Nuri Said's Arab regulars, who had crossed the line and were making for Mezerib on the western branch, not far from Yarmuk, the scene of Lawrence's failure a year

before. While the Arabs looted the station at Mezerib, Young and Lawrence cut the telegraph wires, by which Liman von Sanders controlled his army. It was not so easy to get at the railway until an Armenian officer sent word that he would betray the bridge-guard, a scheme outside Young's notions of military propriety. But nothing came of it, because a German column arrived to reinforce the post. With an easy mind Lawrence could slip away, ordering the Arabs to disperse, for he knew that it suited Allenby's book better to draw the precious German reserves to this sector even than to cut the railway. As they retired across the southern branch, on a bright mild evening 'very unfit for dying', Lawrence tried to urge his tired escort against another railway garrison, but they were fought to a standstill. They would not follow him under fire until driven by threats of ferocious punishment, which was duly exacted next day by their commander. In the darkness he blew up a great bridge, his seventy-ninth, with an explosion that might have been heard at Damascus.

By September 17th the task of the Arab Northern Army was done, and its energy exhausted; but the Bedouin were in arms against Turkish stragglers, and the villagers were joining in the general destruction. Gap after gap was

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cut in the railway by the untiring Englishmen, who cruised along the line in armoured cars. Lawrence tells of two such raids he made with Junor, on one occasion engaging in a running fight with an armed train, and, on another, shooting up the planes standing on a lonely landing ground.

Colonel Joyce now withdrew most of the auxiliaries to rejoin the Arab Southern Army in front of Ma'an, while Lawrence flew to Allenby's cool, fly-proof head-quarters to give and get information. Relaxing there in comfort which he half-consciously contrasted with the hot glare of his desert bivouac, he heard the news of Megiddo. The Turks had been completely deceived. At 4.30 a.m. on September 19th British artillery and infantry had smashed a path through the weak coastal sector for General Chauvel's cavalry, who now were sweeping round the Turkish rear towards Nazareth and the Jordan Valley. The Turkish Eighth Army no longer existed, the Seventh Army was already outflanked and doomed to destruction, the Fourth Army, beyond Jordan, alone had any hope of fighting its way out through Deraa. So complete a victory, thought Lawrence, might excuse the paltry Arab handful from further exertions.

But Liman von Sanders was not the man to

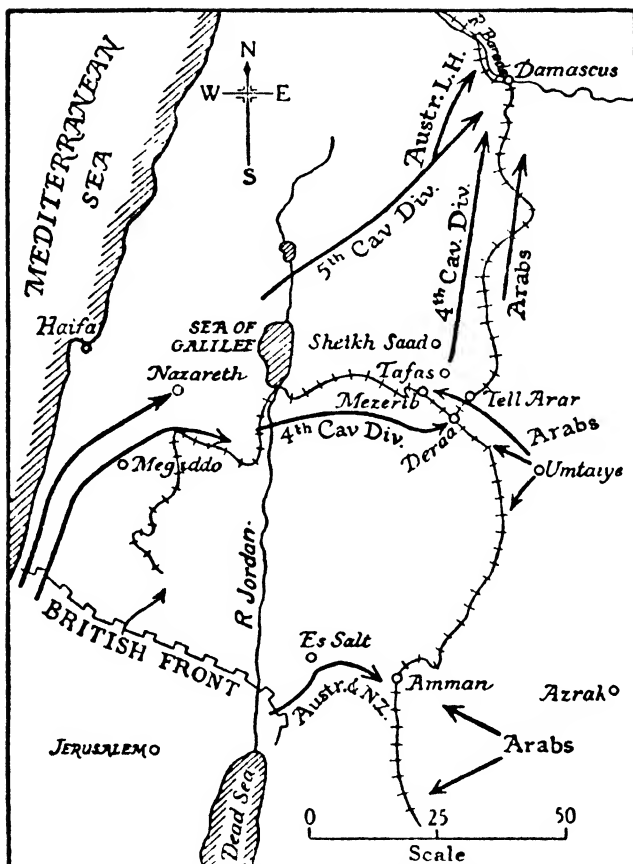
admit defeat. On the 19th he believed his troops to be retiring in good order, and was only undeceived by the arrival of a British Yeomanry Brigade at his head-quarters on the morning of the 20th. They had ridden seventy miles in thirty-four hours. The gallant Prussian escaped in his pyjamas to organise the defence of the town with clerks and orderlies, so successfully that after a sharp street fight he was able to escape to Tiberias, safe, though a hunted fugitive.

Even then he hoped to make a stand at Deraa, but the cavalry pressed on, herding the Turks into defiles where aeroplanes bombed them unrelentingly. On the 21st and 22nd Liman was in Deraa interviewing the Sheikhs of the Druse hills who were loyal to the Turks or might at least be held neutral; and at Deraa he had a momentary gleam of hope. A long-expected despatch arrived from Constantinople, perhaps to tell him that the reinforcements he had demanded were on the way. But no: it was a request that he would offer a prize for the Sack Race in the Garrison Sports to be held at the capital a fortnight later. Rarely has red-tape achieved a more ironical absurdity than this reminder of Liman's own position. He ordered the Fourth Army to retreat, and withdrew his own head-quarters to Damascus, before

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the mouth of the sack was pulled too tight for running.

General Chauvel's cavalry were now ordered to press on towards Damascus, drawing out the arc of their circular course behind the fugitives of the Seventh and Eighth Armies to join with the Arabs at Deraa. Thus the Fourth Army would find its retreat cut off. No record exists of that last hopeless and futile defensive battle. For four days the Turks held on to Amman, still resisting the advance of the Australians and New Zealanders across the Jordan as in the two spring raids. Meanwhile the garrisons from the south were marching up to join them. Ma'an fell into the hands of the Arab Southern Army on the 23rd; its garrison so long beleaguered got clear away. On the 23rd and 24th, the garrison of Amman began to retire towards Deraa, making use of the unbroken sections of the railway. As they retired they still resisted the A.N.Z.A.C. advance against their right flank, still held off the Bedouin on their left. Not till September 25th did the rearguard in Amman surrender to General Chaytor. Three days later the garrison of Ma'an marched in and surrendered on finding their position hopeless. So grim was the fury of the Bedouin against them that Chaytor permitted them to retain their arms; and, for the



The Advance to Damascus, August to October, 1918.

first night, Australians and Turks lay in battle order side by side, protecting one another from England's Arab allies. However, two large columns of Turks from the Fourth Army had got away through Deraa and were approaching the hiding-place where Lawrence and the Northern Arabs lay in wait.

On the 22nd Ross Smith, the Australian airman, had flown back with Lawrence to the desert. The next move was not clear, except to Lawrence, who was determined to advance beyond Deraa to Sheikh Saad east of the Galilean Lake, a village from where he could pounce upon the Turks when he thought fit. The other British officers objected, but were overruled when he announced that he would go, if only with his own body-guard. Next day Nasir, Auda, Tallal, and the French Battery went with him. On the 27th the two columns of Turks came up from the south, having again slipped through the fingers of the British cavalry. Nothing much seemed possible in the face of such great numbers, nor would any attack have been made if these Turks had not stopped in passing to massacre the villagers of Tafas in Sheikh Tallal's country. When Tallal saw their work he rode alone (like Taillefer the Minstrel at the Battle of Hastings) and died charging the Turkish line. 'We will



take his price', said old Auda. The Bedouin, mad for revenge, fell upon these disciplined columns, killing until even Auda's thirst for blood was slaked; but the hard core of the column, the German and Austrian machine-gunners, again fought their way out, 'They were two thousand miles from home, without hope and without guides. They were glorious', wrote Lawrence.

That evening a horde of bloodthirsty tribesmen rode into Deraa, and late at night 'when men went crazy' Lawrence entered the town alone. Above all now he was anxious to forestall the British, since one of the pledges to the Arabs was that they might keep what lands they set free. With Nasir and Nuri Said he began to restore order by putting guards over the public buildings. Next morning, September 28th, General Barrow's cavalry, the 4th Division, arrived from the west. For ten days they had been harrying a routed army, but, wrote the General, 'in the whole course of this war in France and in Palestine I have never seen such a sight of general misery'. He had not seen Tafas on the previous day. His first view of Lawrence inspired little confidence in Lawrence's credentials; but later he thawed out, saluted the Arab flag, and accepted Lawrence's help in watering his horses. On the 29th the advance was re-

sumed, Nuri Said and the Arabs working on the right flank of the cavalry.

Lawrence's irony about General Barrow's stiffness and slowness, which makes delightful reading in the *Seven Pillars*, is perhaps a little unjust. In the midst of an orgy of looting, Lawrence was much distressed when an Indian trooper pilfered some trifle from Nasir. In a scene of blood and destruction he blamed Barrow for not recognising Arab authority. It irked him 'to see the caution of Barrow's advance'. Far ahead of the Indian Cavalry, who reconnoitred before they moved, Lawrence and Stirling cruised on in the 'Blue Mist', and far out on the flank the Bedouin roved in search of Turkish stragglers to rob and kill. Lawrence's furious energy that day provoked the famous report by a London Yeomanry patrol: 'there's an Arab over there in a Rolls-Royce, speaks perfect English, and seems to be in a hell of a rage'. But Barrow's caution was common-sense, and his rate of progress by any other standard than Lawrence's was rapid indeed. Have any cavalry, excepting the 5th Division on Barrow's left, ever marched farther and faster in tropical heat? Unlike the Arabs his men could not disperse in search of food or when tired of fighting. Their astonishing ride from the sea-coast to Deraa had ended in three days and

nights almost without off-saddling. They had come to their last day's supply of food and forage, yet in two days more they advanced another forty miles.

It was neither Barrow nor Lawrence who captured Damascus. Allenby was throwing out four clutching tentacles to close round the city, the left-hand tentacle flung widest. While the Arabs came up from the south and Barrow's men from the south-west, Macandrew's 5th Division came in from the west and outside them the Australian Light Horse were intercepting in the Barada Gorge ('Pharpar, the River of Damascus') the remnants of the Fourth Army who had escaped from Tafas. On the night of September 30th British cavalry camped on two sides of Damascus, Nasir's Arabs on a third. Lawrence and Stirling bivouacked beside the 'Blue Mist', watching the explosions as the retreating Turks blew up their stores. Next day General Chauvel, commanding both the Cavalry Divisions, intended to encircle and take the town. There was to be no battle. Already the Arab plotters had hoisted Feisal's flag, in the face of the retreating Turks. On the morning of October 1st, the long-awaited day, Ali Riza Pasha the Military Commandant rode out to breakfast with General Barrow. The Turks had never known that he was their enemy. In

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the town, an Arab named Shukri set up a provisional government and sent a horseman to greet the Arab Army. It was characteristic of Lawrence's way that the messenger came first to him, but was sent on to Nasir, who should have 'the honourable entry, a privilege of his fifty battles'. Lawrence and Stirling stopped to shave at a wayside stream before entering the city.

Who had really taken Damascus? Plain-spoken Major Young used to answer this question by saying that Emir Feisal had at least six hundred men with him, and General Chauvel not more than fifteen thousand, when the city surrendered. But this hardly solves the problem; Damascus was not captured but liberated. Without Chauvel's cavalry, Feisal would not have got there; but without Feisal's Arab rising, Damascus would not have received the British as friends. October 1st was a day of frenzied rejoicing for the populace, and of confusion for the victorious armies. Early in the day some Australian horsemen galloped in at the West Gate and out again at the North Gate in pursuit of a Turkish column. A little later, Nasir rode in from the East, then came Lawrence and Stirling in the 'Blue Mist' with multitudes before and behind cutting down branches from the trees to strew them in the way. Later Chauvel entered by the South Gate and

readily—gratefully—entrusted the civil administration to the Arabs.

Lawrence had ruefully discovered that the art of politics would oblige him to practise new deceits more distasteful to him than the deceits of war. Wild men like Auda, chivalrous men like Nasir, must be thrust aside in favour of bureaucrats and politicians, even in favour of the influential skulkers who had saved their own skins during the war. Two local chiefs, the Sheikh of the Druses and that Abd-el-Kader who had joined Feisal a year before and betrayed him, were hostile to the British and to the Sherifs of Mecca. Both set themselves to ingratiate simple, honourable Nasir. The Druse Sheikh was soon disposed of; he was at feud with Auda, who flew at his throat roaring with fury as soon as they met. Lawrence parted them by force, and had the Sheikh kidnapped away to his mountains.

As Feisal's deputy Lawrence deposed Abd-el-Kader from his office in the provisional government, appointing instead Nuri Said. It was certain that Abd-el-Kader would attempt a *coup d'état*. Above all, Lawrence wished to avoid bringing English troops into the town, and when he explained to Nuri Shaalan that if summoned they would certainly come, and probably not go again, the old chief put his *Rualla* tribesmen at

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Lawrence's disposal. Next night the rising came and was neatly suppressed with little loss of life by the precautions Lawrence had taken. In two days he set up in Damascus the framework of an administration that was to stand for two years. The police, the railway service, the fire-brigade, the sanitary service, the telegraph, the street lighting, the markets were re-established, and a paper currency was issued, while it fell on Young to find rations for Chauvel's 22,000 men and 28,000 horses.

On his third day Lawrence discovered the Turkish military hospital abandoned by its staff, and neglected by an Australian picket which for two days had camped among its buildings. He walked in bare feet over a mat of stinking corpses into the wards where fifty-six dead, two hundred dying, and seven hundred sick of dysentery, lay forgotten. His last labour was to bury the dead, to wash and tend the sick, to find doctors and orderlies. From the empty pomp of his entry into Damascus he turned to the humblest task; and being the greatest among the Princes of the Gentiles, he preferred to be the servant of all. His self-abasement was completed when an army doctor came on the scene. The worst horrors had been abated, but still the scene was so appalling that the doctor, taking Lawrence in

his native dress for the man who had allowed the hospital to lapse into such misery, struck him in the face, calling him a 'bloody brute'. Lawrence laughed and turned the other cheek. In a way he was responsible for all this suffering.

On October 4th, Feisal and Allenby entered the town. Lawrence confidently handed over his work to Allenby, 'gigantic, red, and merry, fit representative of the Power which had thrown a girdle of humour and strong dealing round the world', and asked for leave to go home.

Not only was the quest ended when Lawrence left Damascus by the South Gate, but a spiritual pilgrimage was performed. He was purged of the desire to rule cities and lead men in battle. Five years earlier, his friend, Flecker, had written of that Gate :

To Meccah thou hast turned in prayer with aching  
heart and eyes that burn ;  
Ah Hajji, whither wilt thou turn when thou art there,  
when thou art there ?

With the last stages of the Turkish War, Lawrence had no concern. The 5th Division under Macandrew was soon able to push on towards Aleppo. On his left the infantry fought their way across the Lebanon to Beirut, on his

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right fifteen hundred Arab regulars under Nuri Said advanced along the old caravan route from the North Gate of Damascus.

Thou hast not many miles to tread, nor other foes than  
fleas to dread ;  
Homs shall behold thy morning meal and Hama see thee  
safe in bed.

So far, so good; but between Hama and Aleppo stood Mustapha Kemal with the last rear-guard of the Turkish Empire, stiffened by many German machine-gunners. Nuri Said rushed to the attack and was repulsed. Mustapha Kemal then drew off to a position north of Aleppo and hit a shrewd blow at Macandrew's reconnoitring cavalry, while the Arabs occupied the town. Before Macandrew could deploy against Kemal, the armistice with Turkey was signed, on October 30th, 1918. It was another matter to make such past masters of procrastination and obstruction as the Turkish Generals disarm. Far away to the south a summons to surrender was sent to Medina, where Fakhri Pasha stubbornly held his ground with eight thousand men who might have turned the scale against Allenby if his military pride had permitted him to retreat. ' I have received your letter ', he replied. ' I am a Mohammedan. I am an Osmanli. I am the son



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of Bali Bey. I am a soldier.' With which words the cruel, courageous, old fellow held out until, in January, 1919, his officers mutinied, and handed him over to the Arabs.

## CHAPTER VII

### LAWRENCE AND THE MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT

LAWRENCE's career as a guerrilla leader was finished; for the next two years he was to skirmish on the outer flank of Mr Lloyd George's Government in the field of politics, where his activities are less easy to detect or to appreciate. In the time of reaction, after unloading his cares on to Allenby's broad shoulders, he had gone away with some intention of starting a new career as a disciplined soldier on the Western Front, but the general armistice was signed too soon for that, and, before long, Arab politics became his responsibility again.

Affairs went far from well in Syria. Allenby had set up a military government in general accord with the Sykes-Picot agreement, placing Palestine under a British officer, the Syrian coast under a French officer, and the country behind the line of the Jordan (including Damascus) under Ali Riza Pasha, who had formerly governed Damascus for the Turks. There was continual friction between the Arab officers, some of them half-wild tribesmen, quite incap-

able of administering a settled province, and Chauvel's Australians. Bedouin outrages were avenged by Australian reprisals which Allenby was quite unable to prevent or to punish. According to the Australian official history the Arabs had got far more than they deserved out of the campaign, solely because of Lawrence's intrigues; and only Allenby's stern warning to Feisal prevented further Arab encroachments. It was this check from Allenby, wrote the Australian historian, that sent Lawrence hurrying home to pursue his schemes in London.

It would be more true to say that the Arabs, whose hopes were raised by Allenby's recognition, were enlarging their ambitions. Lawrence had taught them to assert themselves, and they believed that the same tactics which had given them Damascus might yet give them Beirut and the Lebanon. In reality Feisal was a restraining influence on his less politic followers, and Allenby a scrupulous observer of obligations to the French, though few Frenchmen saw things in that light. A Frenchman, who had served the whole campaign and remained as a political officer in the Lebanon, recorded in his diary that the English created a legend that the Arabs conquered Damascus, and to bolster it up, permitted the existence of the inefficient Arab

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Government even though it meant starving the British Army and the town. The wealth and culture of Damascus belonged, he wrote, to the Syrian Christians, who looked on Abd-el-Kader as their leader and the French as their protectors, but regarded the Arabs as savages. Lawrence, with the help of the *Rualla* tribesmen, Nuri Shaalan's men, had overthrown Abd-el-Kader's civilised government and murdered him. Evidently there was a British plot to bring all Syria under control of Feisal and his British patrons.

When a French High Commissioner arrived in November, he immediately telegraphed home for twenty thousand troops to assert the French claims to Syria against Arabs and English.

The case against Lawrence has been very clearly put by Colonel Brémond, the distinguished officer who had met him at Jedda two years before. He writes as a professed friend of Anglo-French agreement, and as an ironical critic of the English sentimentality which his compatriots have often called hypocrisy. His cold, precise, documented book is put forward as the antidote to Lawrence's alluring opiate. The French, he says, first undertook to support the Arab Revolt, but were no party to the secret agreements with King Hussein. French officers

and N.C.O.'s played the chief part in the Hejaz War, though their share has been deliberately suppressed. French officers were more numerous than English in the southern campaign against Medina where the main Turkish army was engaged. Even in the north, where Feisal's exploits have been magnified for political reasons, the exploits of the French are forgotten. Lawrence, intelligent and courageous as he was, had no military knowledge, and was no commander. At Tafila, his greatest battle, he counted on the French section of Artillery, but said nothing about them in his official report, though he had thanked them profusely in the field. During the advance on Damascus, a crazy expedition which no soldier would have risked, Lawrence was saved by the Frenchman Pisani, whose battery of artillery alone prevented the destruction of the Arabs at Tafas. Why, then, had France nothing to show for these exertions? Because the English subsidies of gold and gifts of munitions had been lavish, while the French authorities, niggardly everywhere except on the Western Front, had lost their opportunity of conquering Syria. But Lawrence, said Brémont, had not only outwitted the French, he had also outwitted the English to gratify his inexplicable attachment to Emir Feisal. By sedulously advertising Arab successes

and persuading Allenby of their importance, he had raised this obscure intriguing Emir to a place high above his merits; he had detached the Bedouin from Turkey by paying them the subsidies which they had formerly got from the Turks; and finally he had cleverly manœuvred the Arabs into Damascus as if they had conquered it, and had persuaded the Australians, the real conquerors, to camp outside.

The candid reader will admit that, allowing for a certain change of emphasis and for personal animosities, Brémond's account is not wholly inconsistent with Lawrence's.

Lawrence left Damascus on October 4th and reached England on November 11th, 1918, Armistice Day. The only reward he accepted for his services was the full rank of Colonel (which entitled him to travel home from Taranto in a sleeping-car); but if not employed in high office, he was very soon at work again. After an interview with the Middle Eastern Committee of the Cabinet, he was sent to attend Emir Feisal, who was now on his way to Europe as delegate for King Hussein at the Peace Conference. This was the occasion of a passage of arms with Colonel Brémond, whom the French Government had sent to receive Feisal. The Emir was to be

entertained merely as a distinguished visitor, Lawrence as a commonplace British Colonel, and as nothing at all if he 'disguised' himself in Arab dress. Finding his reception cold, Lawrence, correctly, returned to England, but a few days later went to Boulogne to bring Feisal across the Channel. There Brémont met him again, looking, said the Frenchman, 'like a choir-boy' with his pink face and white robe. Lawrence cherubically invited Brémont to England, but could not persuade him to come.

At the first sessions of the Versailles Conference in January, 1919, Lawrence attended in a double capacity, as a member of the Foreign Office delegation, and as interpreter for Emir Feisal. In the latter capacity, when he could get a hearing, he distinguished himself by addressing the Council with equal fluency in French, Arabic, and English; in the former capacity he already had the ear of Mr Lloyd George, always sympathetic to the claims of small nations. Feisal's statement, laid before the Council of Ten on February 6th, was eagerly debated by Mr Lloyd George and M. Pichon.

The French case was simple; they wished to carry out the strict terms of the Sykes-Picot Treaty by which Beirut and the Syrian Coast would come under their protectorate, Damascus

and the Syrian hinterland in their 'zone of influence'. Against this Mr Lloyd George pleaded that times had changed since 1916. The principle of self-determination had been accepted by the allies, and the Arabs, who had fought for their liberty, deserved to retain it. Though England would not accept a 'mandate' for Syria, she ought to be consulted about its destiny after conquering Turkey at a cost of a hundred thousand dead. Pichon adroitly took up the question of a mandate, a new feature of international law invented since the Sykes-Picot Treaty. If the treaty was to be superseded by a mandatory system, then France should have the mandate for the whole of Syria, including Damascus; France was under no obligation to Hussein or his sons.

But Feisal had already left Versailles, despairing of finding justice there. All he had won was the honours of debate. When Pichon harked back to the Crusades as evidence of France's ancient mission in Syria, Saladin's successor silenced him by asking politely who had been the conqueror in the Crusades. Lawrence, having no further duties at the Conference, went to Egypt to fetch his private papers. On the way the Handley-Page, in which he was a passenger, crashed near Rome. The pilot was killed, and



Lawrence broke two ribs; his lung, damaged in this accident, never quite recovered.

In July Feisal and Lawrence returned to Paris, pinning their hopes now chiefly on the United States, but the cause was lost. Clemenceau and Lloyd George came to a provisional agreement which was a modernised version of the Sykes-Picot Treaty. The British troops in Syria were to be replaced by French, and the Arab Government at Damascus was to accept French advisers. British diplomacy was then directed towards persuading Feisal to come to terms with the French.

Lawrence was demobilised in July, 1919. Renouncing his rank and his decorations, he withdrew from public life and devoted himself to pleading the Arab cause privately. He was also hard at work that summer upon the first draft of his book.

In writing the *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence displayed some of the inverted vanity which he knew so well to be one of his characteristic faults; and, while shrinking from the public gaze, attracted to himself and to the book a fiercer glare of publicity than any other author has known in this century. It was a penance that he had laid on himself that he who, alone of the participants, had seen the Revolt, wholly, from

both sides, should complete his task by recording all that had been done and suffered; it was a duty to his countrymen to ensure that their efforts had not been forgotten, and a duty to the Arabs to ensure that their view of the war should be seen in England; but the book was also the *apologia* of a man who had completed a task after losing faith in its propriety; it was to be a history and a confession. He would use his pen in a last struggle for the Arab cause, by converting posterity to a belief in the policy which the delegates at Versailles had rejected; and at the same time he would unburden his own conscience, by laying bare the duplicities he had practised, the abominations he had forced himself to inflict and to endure, his weaknesses and his failures; thus for ever exorcising the phantom figure of Colonel Lawrence, the Uncrowned King of Arabia.

First, the book must be completed, and, in order to give Lawrence the opportunity, Mr Geoffrey Dawson persuaded the Fellows of All Souls College to elect him to a sinecure Fellowship in November, 1919. Lawrence's return to Oxford was not a success: he could not fit himself into the easy sociable life of a don, even at All Souls, a foundation which exists to endow the work of distinguished young scholars. There

was little comfort in Common Room for a man who ate almost nothing, neither drank nor smoked, and whose habits were nocturnal. He made no mark on the University; his face was never seen, his residence in Oxford was hardly known by the undergraduates—then, mostly, ex-officers, who might have made a hero of him.

He spent little time in Oxford, preferring to work in an empty room placed at his disposal by the architect, Sir Herbert Baker, above his Westminster office.

The first draft of the *Seven Pillars*, by an accident to which the romantic have tried to attach some sinister significance, was lost when Lawrence left it in the refreshment room at Reading railway station. There is no reason for supposing that the thief who took it set on it any value beyond the price of the leather case in which it was contained. At first Lawrence was disposed to regard the loss as a good riddance, and to wash his hands of it, until Hogarth, always his best counsellor, persuaded him to try again. Early in 1920, a second draft was produced. 'The lost draft', wrote Lawrence to a friend, 'was shorter, snappier, and more truthful than the present version, which was done from memory. I do not think it was franker and angrier, for I do not get angry much.' He was probably doing an

injustice to his own remarkable memory, in suggesting that the second draft has not the same authenticity as the first; no critic has cast doubt on his accuracy in matters of fact. Where the *Seven Pillars* is vague or obscure, the author has deliberately made it so. His laborious and frequent revisions denoted the scruples of a conscientious artist. As he revised, he shortened the text again. He consulted writers, whose prose he admired, about literary technique, but admitted no obligation to any of them except to Mr and Mrs Bernard Shaw who were responsible 'for all the present semi-colons'. And when the Middle East was at last pacified he added a footnote claiming that justice had after all been done to the Arabs. When the second draft was completed to his satisfaction in 1922, it was set up in type at the office of the *Oxford Times*, and a few proofs were pulled for the author's friends. At that time he intended they should go no further; the book was for posterity.

During his Oxford period, Lawrence's legendary fame, the Lawrence-Myth, came into existence. Until then his story was entirely unknown to the English people. In April, 1916, a small notice appeared in *The Times*, full, in those days, of such announcements, saying that the French

Government had gazetted Second Lieutenant T. E. Lawrence, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. The name meant nothing to the public, and the services for which the award was made remain unknown. Perhaps it was a decoration given as a mere compliment to a staff officer, perhaps the reward of some unrevealed secret service. A few months later, the Arab Revolt was described at some length in the newspapers, but the censored press spoke of no British co-operation. As the war proceeded despatches from Palestine contained somewhat patronising references to the raids of Feisal's Arabs against the railway, but no mention of British adventurers in their ranks. A Major T. E. Lawrence was made C.B. in August, 1917, an unusually high honour for so junior a rank; and nine months later, among hundreds of others, he was given the D.S.O. These three honours lists are the only occasions when Lawrence's name appeared in *The Times* before the Armistice, except for a tiny notice in September, 1918. A paragraph, quoted from the *Echo de Paris*, at the foot of a back page is headed 'BRITISH COLONEL WITH THE ARABS'. 'Side by side', it says, 'with General Allenby and Colonel Piépapé [commanding the French detachment] we must mention Colonel Lawrence as having played a

part of the greatest importance in the Palestine Victory . . . his experience and talents . . . as head of a cavalry force of Bedouin . . . will become historic.' No more was reported of him in the full and fair accounts of the fall of Damascus, a few days later. Allenby's despatches gave no account of him; and strangest of all, Liman von Sanders, in his book, *Five Years in Turkey*, written in 1921, makes no reference to Lawrence, direct or indirect.

On November 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1918, space was found in *The Times* for three long special articles clearly from Lawrence's pen, giving the whole story of Feisal's campaign. The character sketches and romantic incidents which he was to elaborate in the *Seven Pillars* were given here for the first time; but no suggestion was made that any Englishmen were with the Arabs. This was the tale without the hero, but the truth about the hero was beginning to get abroad. Five hundred uncensored correspondents haunted the lobbies of the Peace Conference at Versailles looking for picturesque detail, which they could not fail to find in the pale tragic figure of Emir Feisal pleading to retain the kingdom he had won with his sword. Nor were they slow to notice the little English officer who accompanied Feisal, in Arab dress, especially when this young man had the ear

of the notables, influenced Mr Lloyd George, dined with Lord Robert Cecil, and joked with Marshal Foch.

The journalist who got Lawrence's story was Mr Lowell Thomas, an American who had met him in Jerusalem, had paid a visit to the base at Akaba, and was now in touch with him again at Versailles. In August, 1919, Lowell Thomas opened a season of illustrated lectures at Covent Garden, entitled *With Allenby in Palestine and the Conquest of Holy Arabia*. They ran till the following January, and were delivered there and elsewhere to audiences aggregating to a million people—publicity unheard of before the days of broadcasting. But in August Lawrence's name was not yet 'news'. It did not appear in the bill, nor in the review by *The Times* critic, who found the Palestine episodes more interesting than the Arabian. The public, however, took a different view: here was Romance in War, a tale of Jack the Giant-killer, the right tonic for men devitalised by the unheroic mass-murder of Western Front battles. To sit under Lowell Thomas was to enter a world of wish-fulfilment where gallant young subalterns contrived and dared and triumphed, where 'one man with a dream at pleasure might go forth and conquer a crown'.

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If Lawrence, after the war, had settled into a black-coated job in Whitehall, the legend might have perished, but Lowell Thomas's audiences were gratified to discover an even more delightful romance. 'The Uncrowned King of Arabia' had rejected the crown just when it was in his grasp, had renounced his rank, handed back his decorations to the King, and vanished. Knowing persons hinted at the desperate game he had played at Versailles, told gossiping tales of his behaviour at Buckingham Palace, and suggested that his career had hardly begun. He had gone to Syria to stir up the Arabs against the French; he had turned Mohammedan and was organising a Revolt of Islam from Morocco to Afghanistan; or, alternately, he was head of the British Secret Service. By all accounts he had gone underground, and like King Arthur would come again, in some quite surprising fashion.

Mr Lowell Thomas was not slow to adjust the emphasis of his lectures. By November, the posters announced the title of his lecture as *With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia*; he was in the headlines at last. When *The Times*, that month, announced Lawrence's election to All Souls College, the prim quarter-column enumerating, without comment, his academic and military honours mentioned that, for his services



in the East, he had received the unprecedented honour of being made ' a Prince of Mecca '.

The legend was now propagated. Lawrence's real achievements were ascribed to a picturesque creature, a boy in years, a dwarf in stature—for his age and height were underestimated, a master of disguise—which the real Lawrence almost never attempted, an expert in all the dialects of Arabic—talents which he always disclaimed, a crude adventurer rather than the complex conscience-stricken scholar who had drifted back into retirement at Oxford, a ' Prince of Mecca ' which to those who knew Arabia was not only an unprecedented but an unmeaning title.

Yet Lowell Thomas had meant well. He knew Lawrence and knew the Palestine Front. It is evident that he had read one of the early drafts of the *Seven Pillars* when he wrote his book. The historian of the Palestine Campaign sums up its value by saying that ' it shows the limitations of a clever and quite well-equipped popular journalist in recording a complicated story . . . the greater part of what happens all over the world is retailed to the general public by the popular press not half so accurately as are Lawrence's activities by Mr Thomas '.

The effect of this reporting was to make Lawrence's retirement for ever impossible. If he

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changed his name, his trade, or his residence, the mystery attaching to him grew deeper, and it is fair to add that his desire for privacy was qualified by a love of mystification. He liked to drop hints in conversation and in writing that there was a mystery about his birth, and the frequency with which he changed his name is not entirely explained by a wish to hide from the public. He was not a British Colonel disguised as an Arab, nor Lawrence disguised as Shaw, but someone else, still his own man, someone who answered to neither of these names, was comfortable in neither of these costumes, someone whose true name and nature he would conceal even from himself, who had been naked to the world only at some ecstatic moments of exaltation and degradation, perhaps beside the Pool of Azrak or in the torture-chamber at Deraa, someone who was now to be wrapped up in mystery for ever.

The Lawrence-Myth, erratic as it was in England, grew wildly extravagant abroad. The French press held him directly responsible for the Syrian Revolt against the French Mandate; in 1922 he was believed to be organising the Riffi tribes in their war with Spain. As late as 1931 an English tourist was arrested in Spanish Morocco

solely because his second name was 'Lawrence'. 'Colonel Lawrence, who possesses a mystical faith in the Arab future, and who speaks fluently all the North African dialects, has just been converted to Mohammedanism. This agent of the Intelligence Service has been in the forbidden zone of the Riff, where he is visiting the villages, and, they say, stirring up the young men to revolt against the white invaders': this was but an article in a local paper, but no wilder than the allegations of the state-controlled Italian press that he was organising the Abyssinians against them in 1935. Within the knowledge of the present writer, some well-informed Germans were shocked not so much at the obviously false reports of Lawrence's death, as at the cynical blasphemy of many respectable and prominent Englishmen in attending his mock-funeral. Lawrence's mere presence, as an aircraftman, on the North-West Frontier of India was too much for the nerves of Soviet Russia; there he was no Mahdi but an English agent sent to turn the hearts of the Afghans (whose language, no doubt, he spoke fluently) against the Bolsheviks.

Lawrence did, indeed, return to political life, but neither as spy, partisan, nor prophet. During

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1919 and 1920 he wrote many letters to *The Times*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Herald*, and the *Manchester Guardian*, and published signed and unsigned articles on Arabian affairs in English and American periodicals. His contributions to *The Times* are easily recognisable. He began hopefully, pointing out that the British pledges to the Arabs might yet be honoured, and pleaded for an early settlement. On September 11th, 1919, he enumerated in *The Times* the four pledges made to the Arabs, stating frankly that they were not inconsistent with one another. (1) Sir Henry MacMahon had promised King Hussein that the British would set up an Arab kingdom or kingdoms, saving certain reservations of French interests. (2) By the Sykes-Picot Treaty the French reservations were defined. (3) A committee of Arabs in Cairo had been promised that Arabs should rule the lands they liberated. In fact, the Arabs had liberated and were ruling the Hejaz, Trans-Jordania, Damascus. (4) A declaration issued by Lord Robert Cecil in November 1918 that 'France and Great Britain are at one in encouraging the establishment of indigenous governments in Syria and Mesopotamia. . .'. All that was needed was for the French in Syria and the British in Mesopotamia to create Arab administrations. This was

Lawrence in his most optimistic mood; he had not been so pleased with the pledges when explaining them to desert sheikhs.

But nothing was done. Among the welter of difficulties with which Mr Lloyd George was struggling, war raging with Russia, war breaking out in Ireland, war with Afghanistan, no peace signed with Turkey, and a thousand points of friction with France, the internal administration of Syria must wait its turn. For the sake of world-peace, the pledge to France must be honoured first, the pledge to the Arabs must wait until a Treaty of Peace with Turkey defined the frontiers of the new Arab State. The British army was replaced by a French army in Syria, and the British advisers by French advisers at Damascus.

Among the Arab officials at Damascus several who had held high rank in Feisal's army, among them Jaafar, Nuri Said, and Maulud, were by origin Mesopotamians. In 1919 the fire of nationalism raged through the East, fanned by the wind of President Wilson's words. Some of the Arabs, a little swollen-headed, supposed that they could spread the conflagration through the whole Arab area in spite of England and France. How far they were encouraged by Lawrence is not known. It had always been his policy to

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encourage them to act for themselves, to hearten them by claiming for them the largest share of credit for joint campaigns, and to warn them against the danger of exchanging a Turkish for a French or an English master.

‘Trust not for freedom to the Franks’, he might have said as Byron said to the Greeks in a like dilemma:

‘In native swords, and native ranks,  
The only hope of freedom dwells;  
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,  
Would break your shield, however broad.’

Perhaps there was a moment at the end of 1919 when Lawrence dallied with the idea of an Arab *coup d'état*; it certainly was in the minds of some of the Arab leaders. Sir Arnold Wilson in Mesopotamia complained that Maulud had slipped across from Syria to intrigue against the British. In the spring of 1920 Lawrence was silent—at Oxford or elsewhere, while an active and vociferous Arab Congress at Damascus was proclaiming Feisal King of Syria, and his brother Abdulla King of Mesopotamia, thus defying England as well as France, and combining them in antagonism to the Arab cause.

Next month, April, was held the Conference of San Remo, the ‘allied prize-distribution’, at

which the Mandates for Syria and Mesopotamia were given to France and England respectively. A French ultimatum calling on Feisal to submit to the Mandate and Feisal's inevitable refusal were followed by a French occupation of the city. France, in the name of the League of Nations, was able to overthrow, with a fair show of legality, the Arab State which Allenby and Lawrence had created.

In the summer of 1920 Lawrence's pen was again active. He had lost Syria, but would yet save Mesopotamia. He now went into open opposition, denouncing the policy of the government in left-wing newspapers, and especially concentrating on Lord Curzon whose method, policy, and conception of British rule were the opposite of his own. Lawrence had been studiously rude, behaving 'like a giggling school-boy', when Curzon welcomed him to a cabinet meeting with a ceremonious speech. On August 9th Lawrence allowed himself to be 'interviewed' by the *Daily Herald*. A Viceroy at the Foreign Office was too heavy a handicap, he said, especially when L. G. interfered with him. 'We might as well have no Foreign Office.' We leave too much to the man on the spot in Mesopotamia, and he, being an officer from India [Sir Arnold Wilson], rules the country

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like an Indian province with 450 British officers, most of whom can't speak Arabic. And the result—a rising against the British, troops brought from India, and a bill of thirty millions to be paid by the British tax-payer. What is the solution? To take away the British officers and to set up a native government with one strong Englishman as adviser, to govern Mesopotamia as Cromer governed Egypt.

Early in 1921, Mr. Lloyd George reconstructed his cabinet, humiliating Curzon by taking the settlement of the Middle East, Curzon's lifelong interest, from the Foreign Office, and placing it under Mr Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary. It seemed likely to be a thankless task. The revolt in Mesopotamia had been stamped out, and a sullen country was being held down by a huge garrison at enormous expense. The Government, drawing towards the end of its term, was bitterly assailed by the whole press, either for the expense or for the autocracy of its Mesopotamian policy. Mr Churchill attacked the problem with characteristic ingenuity and courage. He at once instituted a Middle Eastern Department under Mr (now Sir John) Shuckburgh and called in two assistants from outside; one was Major Young, the other Lawrence, 'a poacher turned game-keeper'. On March 1st,



1921, the three opened their office in an unfurnished basement room in Whitehall. As soon as the Department was at work Mr Churchill summoned a conference at Cairo, and in a few weeks solved the Mesopotamian problem.

Lawrence was not a good bureaucrat, nor a good committee-man. He sometimes kept his files and attended his committees but was most often employed on missions where his infinite powers of persuasion could be used. Man to man, he was irresistible. Before Lawrence and Churchill left for Cairo, they summoned Emir Feisal to London, and agreed that he should offer himself as a candidate for the throne of Mesopotamia. At Cairo, the candidature was approved, and, in the summer of 1921, Feisal was freely elected King of Irak by a large majority of the people. Thus, in part, Lawrence redeemed his own pledge. He had carried Feisal from Wadi Saфра to Damascus, and had made him a King, though a King on an unforeseen throne. His choice of Feisal has been justified by the success of his reign, the steady enrichment of Irak, a long unbroken peace, and, finally, by the admission of Irak to the League of Nations in 1932, a justification also of the mandatory system. But Lawrence did not accompany his friend the Emir to Baghdad; Young made the

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arrangements, the last act of their queer partnership. At Baghdad was waiting the Cromer of Mesopotamia, Sir Percy Cox, and one other irregular adviser, Miss Gertrude Bell, whom Lawrence had jestingly named as his successor, three years earlier. She played the part to perfection.

One of the decisions of the Cairo Conference was to withdraw the troops from Irak and to replace them only by aeroplanes, a change which effected a saving of sixteen million pounds a year and a far more valuable saving in soldiers' lives. Lawrence asserted that the suggestion was his own, but Sir Arnold Wilson claims to have proposed it three years earlier. No doubt Lawrence's persuasive tongue helped to convert the Conference to Air Force control, but the scheme was at that time a subject of general discussion.

Strangely, Emir Abdulla, whom Lawrence had despised during the war, was also provided with a throne in 1921. Old King Hussein, jealous of Feisal when he was a conqueror, stood by him in defeat, and sent Abdulla to fight for him against the French. Lawrence was hastily despatched by aeroplane across the Jordan to intercept Abdulla at Amman. The two returned to Jerusalem to confer with Sir Herbert Samuel,

the Governor of Palestine, and there agreed to improvise the Desert principality of Trans-Jordania, the country in which Lawrence's boldest exploits had occurred. This experiment, too, has been unexpectedly successful; it seems that Lawrence underestimated the characters of both brothers. Feisal was stronger and Abdulla steadier than he, at first, supposed.

There remained Arabia proper. Down at Mecca, King Hussein, an extravagant, overbearing autocrat, continued to assert his claims to empire and to declare himself the dupe of the British, 'a tragic figure', said Lawrence, 'brave, obstinate, hopelessly out-of-date, exasperating'. Nothing that had happened would persuade him to renounce his pretensions, and nothing could save him from destruction. In June 1921, after establishing Abdulla at Amman, Lawrence went to Jedda to negotiate with Hussein, but to no effect. He would have all or nothing. Lawrence was back in England in December, asking Churchill to release him, but was persuaded to stay at the Colonial Office till July 1922, when his letter of resignation to Sir John Shuckburgh was published in the *Morning Post*. 'Since we "changed direction" we have not had, I think, a British casualty in Palestine or Arabia or the Arab provinces of Irak. . . . I shall be very glad

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to leave so prosperous a ship. I need hardly say that I'm always at his [Churchill's] disposal if there is ever a crisis, or any job, small or big, for which he can convince me that I am necessary.'

The pity of it is that no one ever succeeded in convincing him that the crisis had come.

In August he enlisted in the Royal Air Force under the name of J. H. Ross. He was just thirty-five years old.

Lawrence's design for the future of the Middle East was a loose federation of autonomous states lightly linked to the British Empire, under advice rather than control. He wished to see a Commonwealth of free 'brown' states as a counterpoise to the free Commonwealth of the 'white' dominions. British relations with Irak have come close to his ideal, with mutual credit and advantage. Though Irak was the Arab province where his influence was least, he consoled himself for the loss of Damascus by remembering and recording that Irak had far greater scope for expansion in wealth and population. As for the Desert, the breeding-ground of strong men who infiltrate by degrees into the settled lands, he hoped it would be left uncontrolled. Far to the south, in regions Lawrence never visited, other sheikhs threw off the shreds of Turkish rule and

other British agents accredited to them performed feats as bold as Lawrence's. It was his achievement to carry the Arab Revolt out of the Desert into the settled lands. His anxiety was to make his countrymen keep their promise to the Arabs. Syria has lost its free status, but Irak has more territory and freedom than was promised in any of the pledges. That Hussein, and his enemy Ibn Rashid, have both fallen before the might of Ibn Saud casts no reflexion on Lawrence's judgment nor his good faith. Ibn Saud was outside Lawrence's sphere, and Hussein out of his control. If the central deserts were free of Turkish or French or even British tyranny, it satisfied Lawrence.

In the Hejaz where he had studied to conceal his personality behind one or other of the Sherifian princes, Lawrence's name was never widely known. Now that the Sherifs have been overthrown his name and works are forgotten. Even in Trans-Jordania there is no Lawrence legend; a recent traveller tells that Lawrence is remembered only as 'one of those Englishmen who helped us in the war'. He would be the last to regret it.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ‘RECULER POUR MIEUX SAUTER’

To those who regarded Lawrence as the ‘Uncrowned King of Arabia’, his enlistment in the Air Force was explicable only as a blind to cover some secret political activity ; to those who knew the man it was not a surprise. The work for which the world had been anxious to heap honours on him was finished, and gave him no satisfaction. Violence and treachery and compromise had come to a respectable conclusion, allowing him to retire decently from the scene, though with the scent of blood on his hands still. Arabia wafted him no perfume to sweeten them. He was exhausted and disillusioned, but his ties with the East were snapped, and he was free. Ten million young soldiers blinked their way out of murky war into the daylight of the nineteen-twenties in a like mood; on many others as on Lawrence the effect of war was to seal up the springs of activity, forcing the mind to turn inwards and work upon itself.

He was tired of responsibility, but unwilling to serve a master unless he could find a master

worthy of his entire respect. Fear of disillusion prevented him from attaching himself even to Allenby, the man he admired most. Social life was perpetually disappointing; at the instant when intimacy was reached, the idol would always reveal feet of clay. To be a leader held no more attraction for him. He had always despised rank and ceremony, and after learning how crude and easy a task it was to set kings on thrones, he had no more liking for the wretched trade of king-making. Still he loved good company and intellectual exchange, but, in friendship, always avoided intimacy; he professed an almost morbid disgust for physical passion. Like his namesake, D. H. Lawrence, he could not rid himself of the belief that in bodily intimacy could be found the solution of life's mystery; but, unlike D. H. Lawrence, he shrank from solving it. Some ultimate fear of sexual surrender may well be the key to his frustrated life.

It was better to be an artist, or a mechanic, and to master refractory materials, than to deal with men. Technical triumphs were the cleanest, having no contemptible element of *diathetics*. To enlist as an aircraftman would rid him of all responsibility, would allow him to live celibate but sociable, would rest his strained nerves and tired will, would permit him to shake off the un-

happy past. Renouncing his old life, he would renounce his name and be born again as J. H. Ross. With like motives his remote ancestors sometimes retired ‘into religion’; Uxbridge aerodrome was to be his modern cloister.

At first he hid his identity, but the secret crept out and was sold to the newspapers. The Air Ministry, not one whit less credulous than the continental press, took fright and discharged him from the service. Lawrence’s first, unhappy experience of life in the Air Force was recorded in his unpublished book, *The Mint*. With connivance from friends in high position, he enlisted again, in the Tank Corps, and under the new pseudonym of T. E. Shaw, which he afterwards adopted by deed-poll. From 1923 to 1925 he was stationed at Bovington Camp, Dorset, in a neighbourhood where he determined to make his home; but finding the Tank Corps too much devoted to discipline and drill, he sought privately for permission to return to the Air Force, where he could fix his attention on machines. In August, 1925, Lord Trenchard arranged for Lawrence’s transfer to the Air Force at Cranwell, where he did the duty of storeman.

All his life Lawrence had a boyish craving for speed, which he was at last able to gratify by testing motor bicycles for the Brough company.



A hard life, little food, regular routine, and, for relaxation, hot baths and runs down to Dorset at sixty miles an hour suited him physically, and induced a happier mood.

He had never ceased to work at his account of the Arab Revolt, and was at last persuaded by Gertrude Bell to issue the 'Subscribers' Edition'. Since the honourable settlement of the Middle East the book, which he had intended as the story of a failure, could bear the title: *Seven Pillars of Wisdom, a Triumph*. It was a tribute to courage, endurance, and faith, to the leaders who had made a nation, to the allied soldiers who had worked with them; but there was an ironical antithesis between the first half of the title and the second. The triumph was seen through the tired eyes of a man whose seven-pillared house had fallen. 'Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars', said King Solomon, but added, 'If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself.'

When he had decided on publication, the craftsman in Lawrence took charge; his memorial should be worthy of its subject. More labour than had been spent in constructing sentences and wringing the last drop of meaning out of words was now spent on lay-out, illustration, and binding. As a typographical connoisseur, he

‘ was quite willing to re-write the text if a short line or break threatened to mar the page ’, which he designed in his favourite Caslon type. The book was put to press in a little printing-shop, by two men who spent three years in completing to Lawrence’s satisfaction the first printing of the text and the over-printing of the illustrations. The final collation of sheets was supervised by Lawrence, who varied the number and position of the plates, so that few copies are identical. Some incomplete copies were given to his old comrades, about a hundred were sold to subscribers. The price quoted in advance, £30, proved quite insufficient to defray the cost, which rose before the edition was issued, late in 1926. A year later a copy was sold in London for £570.

The cost of production, which is said to have reached £13,000, he repaid by issuing the popular abridged edition, called the *Revolt in the Desert*, from which the geography and the politics and the personal confessions were omitted. In the larger work his purpose of telling the story of the Revolt is marred by lapses into introspection, his confessions confused by the intrusion of mere history; so that the abridged version is in one respect—that of unity—the better book. But in his later life, Lawrence projected his own per-

sonality into all that he said or wrote from the heart; and he appreciated the distinction between the titles of the two books. One was actually about the Revolt in the Desert, the other, though designed to be an account of the Revolt, was a book about himself.

At the end of 1926 Lawrence was sent out to India and stationed at Karachi for about eighteen months; he rarely left camp except on duty, and steadfastly refused to exploit his opportunities as a best-selling author. The *Revolt in the Desert* had been so successful as to pay off the debt on the *Seven Pillars*, and to provide a surplus of £15,000, all of which he gave anonymously to Air Force charities: he would take no profits from the Revolt. But, in 1928, when he was posted to Miramshah, 'a mud-brick fort beset by the tribes of Waziristan', his imagination was fired by an invitation to translate the *Odyssey*, all the more because the offer came from Mr Bruce Rogers, the American typographer. It was an appeal to a classical scholar and to a man who loved fine printing. Was there another scholar-printer in the world who had 'hunted wild boars and watched wild lions, sailed the Aegean, bent bows, lived with pastoral peoples, built boats and killed many men'? In the Homeric air of the North-West Frontier, his subject-

matter again took shape from his own life. The translator was out of sympathy with the author, but in sympathy with Odysseus’ self-pitying mood: ‘ I am not like the immortals of spacious heaven. . . . Think, rather, of those men who in your experience have been most vexed with pains and griefs: for it is to them that I would liken myself in my miseries.’

The American edition of his *Odyssey* earned for Lawrence the money on which he was able to retire. By casual ill-paid anonymous journalism and translation, he had secured the purchase of a cottage at Cloud’s Hill; he was now able to pay off the debt, and to furnish it with the only luxuries he required, a hot-water system and a plunge-bath. His whole fortune was, in the end, estimated at seven thousand pounds.

Meanwhile, unrest in Afghanistan and Russian concern about his supposed activities led to his being sent back to England. Strong pressure was brought on the new Labour Government by mystery-mongers to expel him from the Air Force, with the consequence (alleged by Captain Liddell Hart and never denied) that he was allowed to remain in the service only on condition of breaking with those of his friends who were prominent in the Conservative Party—then in opposition. This, surely, was the meanest

insult that timidity could devise, and Lawrence swallowed it.

In 1929 his mechanical abilities were used in preparing the machines which won the Schneider Cup, and for the last six years of his life he was busier and happier. For four years he was stationed chiefly at Mount Batten near Plymouth; then was moved to Southampton where for more than a year he lived in lodgings. His last service was to test the seaworthiness of the fast Scott-Paine motor boats which have now been adopted by the Navy and the Air Force for use in emergencies where speed is the first requirement. Speed and mechanical efficiency by land, sea, and air were the objects of his last interests, his last activities; he was the child of his age in the manner of his life and of his death.

The end of his term as an aircraftman he spent at Bridlington, sometimes alarming his friends by going off to sea alone, for days at a time, in the boat he was testing. He was discharged on completion of his service on February 26th, 1935. Colonel Lawrence had long vanished; Aircraftman Shaw followed him into oblivion; there were many who hoped that a third *avatar* would reveal still greater powers, that the ascetic would emerge refreshed by twelve cloistered years. But Lawrence drifted home to Dorset with no new

orientation, no new faith. ‘ I find myself wishing ’, he wrote to one friend, ‘ that my own curtain would fall. It seems as if I had finished ’; and to another friend he wrote, a few days before the end, that he felt ‘ like a fallen leaf ’. He had not long to wait.

On the morning of May 13th, 1935, he was thrown from his machine while swerving to avoid a boy on a bicycle near Bovington Camp, where he had once served in the Tank Corps. On May 19th he died in the Military Hospital, without having regained consciousness.

No puritan ever examined his own conscience more scrupulously than Lawrence, or was harder upon his own faults. His desire to see himself objectively was never absent, it explains his inconsistent liking for having his portrait painted; he was not vain but inquisitive about himself. But the truth was not to be found there; his character revealed itself in action, and the action ended before the revelation was complete. The inmost secret place of his heart, after he had stripped off all his disguises, remained obscure. Once, as he hints in the dedication to the *Seven Pillars*, there had been in him an inspiration, but the source failed before his Arabian campaign was ended. Afterwards there burned in him

neither the dispassionate love of humanity, nor the passionate love of woman, nor the pure love of God. Only in work could he find the self-surrender for which he craved, which friendship could not provide.

It is easy to enumerate his talents, to praise his virtues: he was generous, kindly, brave, and modest; he had learning, eloquence, and prudence; he asked only to serve, refusing all rewards beyond a bare living; he was master of many trades, and might have excelled as a mechanic, a soldier, a politician, a writer, or a scholar; he had the power of making friends which comes from goodness of heart, and the power of command which comes from fearlessness; he had good humour and good health. But such an estimate, though true, is little to our purpose: he was shy, with that shyness which is the prophylactic against self-assertion; and secretive, for fear of revealing his known superiority. Conscious of his powers, he was unwilling to use them because life offered him no motive.

Lawrence was the archetype of the Lost Generation, the men who would have been in the prime of life if they had not been killed or maimed or silenced by the shock of the Great War. Millions of survivors were withdrawing into cynical silence when he withdrew into his

**' RECULER POUR MIEUX SAUTER '**

twelve years' retirement. If he had won through to a renewed faith he might have pointed out the true direction of the age to our aimless generation, endowed with such technical skill, such powers of self-criticism. But this unknown soldier went to his grave without delivering any message.



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